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CHAPTER XXXIV.

A WELCOME.

EVEN the next morning, when those dark thoughts of Death could probably have been swept away by the Light that was to bring love with it—for she knew that Walter was to be asked to the Hall that day—they were fated to still remain with her; for before his arrival she received a letter from Mr. Allerton, of which Lord Cheribert's death was the keynote.

'I have had no time to write to you of late, dear Grace, nor even the heart to write. I have of course been overwhelmed with business in connection with poor Lord Cheribert's affairs, but his loss itself is what has still more occupied it. If I had not been a witness to his poor father's misery, I might have written. I have grieved for the lad as if he had been my own son. I liked him exceedingly, and there was another reason, of which I cannot forbear to speak, why my sympathies were enlisted in his future: his heart was devoted to one whom I love even better. I have no reason to suppose that his attachment was returned—I hope *now* that it was not so—but I know that he was a great favourite of yours, and that you esteemed his noble nature, and perceived those great merits in him of which few persons, save you and me, were cognisant. I confess that I had looked forward to a time when you and he—but, alas, "all these things have ceased to be," and

it is worse than useless to dwell upon them ; but I know that there is at least one genuine mourner for him beside myself and his father. As regards the latter his fate is an awful lesson to us to be patient with the erring, "especially with those of our own household." His wretchedness wrings my heart. I do not, however, write these lines, dear Grace, to make you sorrowful. I would rather remind you that it is not intended that any loss which Providence inflicts upon us should permanently sadden our lives, and least of all when, as in your case, they are but beginning.'

It was a characteristic letter throughout ; a curious blending of kindness and good sense, of Christian teaching and the wisdom of this world. Grace read it with remorse, for, though its expressions of regret came home to her every one, she was conscious of being in an altogether different frame of mind from that in which the writer expected to find her. How could it be otherwise, when she was about to meet the man of her choice, for the first time in that acknowledged relation ? She felt that she would be a hypocrite and a dissembler if she did not write that very day to enlighten the good lawyer as to the real state of the case.

Mr. Roscoe had been commissioned by Agnes to send a letter by hand to Dale End that morning to invite Walter to exchange his quarters at the Angler's Rest for a lodging in the cottage, and that young gentleman did not take long in settling his very moderate bill and packing his portmanteau. There was a phrase in the letter, which, though not remarkable for grace of expression, made him think more highly of the writer than he had hitherto done, though, as we know, he had always seemed more sensible of his merits than they deserved.

'We shall all be glad to see you again,' he wrote, 'and one of us (I think between ourselves) particularly so.' It was a little precipitating matters, perhaps, but Mr. Roscoe was personally interested in the dénouement of this idyll, and, as he expressed it to himself, was not going to let there be any shilly-shallying about it, so far as he was concerned.

It so happened that Grace took her walk by the lakeside that morning, and, meeting the dogcart with Mr. Atkinson and Walter in it, the former was directed to drive on to the hall (which he did with his tongue in his cheek, and a world of cunning enjoyment in his eyes), and the latter got out and accompanied Grace home on foot : an equivalent in the way of public notice, as far as mine host of the Angler's Rest was concerned, to the publication

of their banns in the parish church. The young couple, however, never wasted a thought on this—though public notice was just then the last thing they desired—but pursued their way with happy hearts and the most perfect natural understanding.

‘Agnes and Philippa have been both so kind,’ murmured the young lady, *à propos des bottes*, as it would have seemed to most ears.

‘And I must say Roscoe has expressed himself in a very friendly way, my darling,’ returned Walter in the same dove-like tones, and without the slightest difficulty in detecting her meaning.

What a walk that was by the crisp and sparkling lake in the late autumn morning! For them it had no touch of winter, and in the dark and wintry days that fell upon them—but of whose advent they had no suspicion, for we are speaking not of the changes of the seasons but of the cold and gloom that was fated to embitter their near future—it recurred to their memories again and again with sad distinctness. There was no need for the one to woo or the other to be wooed; their hearts were wedded already. They were in paradise, and dreamt not of the flaming sword that was to drive them out of it. Their talk would not perhaps have been very interesting to the outsider; but to themselves every syllable was sweet as the honey of Hybla. When we are reading our own verses aloud, says a great poetess, ‘the chariot wheels jar in the gates through which we drive them forth,’ and something of the sort takes place in love language, but the speakers are unconscious of it, nay, its very imperfections, the breaks and stops, the half-finished sentences (closed perhaps by a kiss), the wild and wandering vows that Love in its intoxication dictates, seem eloquence itself to them.

As they now moved slowly homewards (not arm-in-arm, for somehow Walter’s arm had strayed round Grace’s waist), another couple watched them from an elevation of the road that intervened between them and the Hall. They were not outwardly so demonstrative in their attachment to one another, but to judge by their conversation were nevertheless on very familiar terms.

‘There come the two turtle doves,’ observed Mr. Roscoe (for it was he and Philippa); ‘I am glad to see that they are billing and cooing already. If “happy’s the wooing that’s not long a doing,” they will have something to be congratulated upon.’

‘I hope so, indeed,’ sighed Philippa. ‘Though even then I don’t see the end of our own trouble.’

'It will be a very satisfactory event in itself at all events,' observed her companion.

'You mean in a pecuniary point of view, I suppose,' returned Philippa gloomily. 'I sometimes wish that there was no such thing as money.'

'If you add "or the want of it," I will agree with you,' responded her companion drily. 'But their marriage will do much for us, I hope. It will certainly be one of two obstacles removed from our path.'

'But how far the lesser one,' remarked Philippa, with such a deep-drawn sigh that it seemed almost like a groan of despair.

'That is true enough,' he answered, with knitted brow, 'but it is not you, remember, who suffer from Agnes, as I do. *You* are not pestered with her importunities and her impatience. She does not overwhelm *you* with her unwelcome attentions; indeed,' he added with his grimmest smile, 'you seem of late to be more free from anything of the sort than ever.'

'It may be a laughing matter to you, but not to me, Edward,' she answered angrily. 'You don't know what a woman feels who is situated as I am; and it seems to me that you don't much care.'

'Nay, nay, do not say that, my dear,' he replied in his most honeyed tone. 'I feel for you very much.'

'To see her coming between me and you,' continued Philippa vehemently, and without taking notice of this blandishment, 'as though she had a right to do it, drives me half frantic; to have to set a guard all day upon lip and eye, lest word or glance should betray me to her, is not only irksome to me to the last degree, but humiliating. I give you fair warning that I can't stand it much longer.'

She was looking straight before her, and did not see the scowl that darkened her companion's face; for an instant he wore the look of a demon: it vanished, however, as quickly as it came, and when he spoke it was in the same calm persuasive voice—though with perhaps a little more firmness in it—that had served his turn so often.

'My dear Philippa, you seem to have forgotten that this annoyance, of which you not unnaturally complain, was foreseen by us from the first. You made up your mind, you said, to bear it. Under other circumstances we might even have had to bear

it longer ; I need hardly remind you how *that* necessity was put an end to.'

'Great Heaven, how can you speak of it?' cried Philippa, with a low piteous cry. Her face had grown ghastly white to the very lips, and her eyes expressed an unspeakable horror. 'You promised me you never, never would!'

'Pardon me, my dear, I had forgotten,' he murmured penitently; 'I should not have done it.'

But the while she hid her face in her hands and sobbed hysterically, the expression on his own was by no means one of penitence. It was, on the contrary, one of satisfaction, and could it have been translated into words would have run, 'Now I have given her something to think about, which will prevent her dwelling upon these little inconveniences for some time to come.' And indeed it seemed he had, for not a word more did she say concerning them, while the young couple drew nearer and nearer.

'Dry your eyes,' whispered Mr. Roscoe sharply and suddenly, 'Agnes is following us.'

This precaution Philippa had hitherto neglected to take. Perhaps she had concluded that there was no necessity for it, since Grace might naturally enough have ascribed her emotion (for Philippa, unlike her elder sister, was very emotional) to pleasure at seeing her with her lover; but she took it now, and, after pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, fluttered it in the wind, as though she had only taken it out in sign of pleasure to the happy pair.

Then she greeted Walter effusively. 'So glad to see you again amongst us, Mr. Sinclair,' and kissed Grace.

Then Agnes joined them with a smile on her face, but not without an expression on it also that betrayed the recent presence of a frown.

'I had hoped to be the first to bid you welcome to Halswater,' she said, 'but I perceive that I have been anticipated.'

By whom was made clear enough by the angry glance she cast at Philippa.

Before that lady could make what would have probably been no very conciliatory rejoinder, Mr. Roscoe struck in.

'We happened to be walking this way,' he observed apologetically.

That use of the plural pronoun, associating, as it did, himself with Philippa, overcame the slight self-restraint that Agnes was putting upon herself. 'I was not referring to you, Mr. Roscoe,'

she replied; 'you are not the master of the Hall, and therefore not in a position to welcome any of its guests.'

'You are extremely rude and very offensive, Agnes,' exclaimed Philippa furiously.

'Hush, hush,' said Mr. Roscoe reprovingly; 'you are wrong, Miss Philippa, to speak so to your sister, and Miss Agnes is perfectly right. I must have seemed to her, no doubt—though she was mistaken in so thinking—to have taken too much upon myself,' and he removed his hat and bowed to Agnes.

Her face was a spectacle; it was evident that she bitterly regretted having lost her temper, but that the presence of Philippa prevented her from acknowledging it. To have thus humiliated Mr. Roscoe was pain and grief to her, but she could not humiliate herself by saying so; she looked as though she could have bitten her tongue out. It was an unpleasant quarter of a minute for everybody.

Even Walter Sinclair felt that there were crumpled rose leaves—not to say serpents—in the paradise he had pictured himself as being about to enter.

'It is beautiful weather for the end of October,' he observed, with ludicrous inappositeness; but as any stick does to beat a dog with, so any remark in circumstances of painful embarrassment is seized upon and made use of as a way out of it.

The whole party began talking of autumn tints as though they were peripatetic landscape painters, and had come down to illustrate the neighbourhood.

But in one heart there was such a passion at work—wild rage and cruel hate, and wounded pride, and passionate desire to be even with the cause of his humiliation—that if it could have been laid bare to the eyes of her companions would have frozen the well-meant platitudes upon their lips with the horror of it.

'Philippa is right,' muttered Edward Roscoe to himself, with a frightful oath; 'this state of things shall not go on much longer.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

AT LUNCH.

ON arriving at the Hall, Mr. Roscoe at once took Walter to his quarters at the cottage; he made some excuse about wishing him to take choice of one of two bedrooms, but his real reason was to introduce him to Richard.

Since his brother had been fool enough (as he expressed it to himself) to fall over head and ears in love with the girl, he thought it dangerous that he should have his first meeting with her accepted swain in the young lady's presence; he had confidence in Richard's word, but not in his self-command. He almost feared that he might exhibit some sort of antagonism to the young fellow even as it was. It was, however, a groundless apprehension. So far from showing dislike or embarrassment, Richard received the newly-arrived guest with an excess of friendliness.

'I am glad, indeed,' he said, 'to take the hand of your father's son; it is a pleasure to which I have long looked forward, but which I began to fear I was never again to experience.'

'You knew him well, I know,' returned Walter with reciprocal warmth.

'He was the dearest friend I ever had,' was the other's earnest reply, 'and the best.' He scanned the young fellow from head to feet with curious interest. 'I see a likeness in you, stronger than when last I saw you as a boy, and yet not a strong one. He might have been in youth what you are: but I only knew him in his later years. Not that he was an old man, far from it; nor had fatigue and privation—though he had endured them to the uttermost—weakened his great strength.'

'Yes, he was very strong; and also, as I have heard, a most extraordinary runner,' said Walter.

'Yes, yes,' answered the other hastily; then added, as if to himself, 'Great Heaven, this is horrible!' and sank into a chair with stony eyes and bloodless face.

'My brother is not very well just now,' observed Mr. Roscoe; 'the least emotion excites him strongly. I warned you of this, you know, Richard,' he continued in an earnest, almost menacing tone.

'No, no, it is not *that*,' answered Richard vehemently. 'It is

something of which you know nothing, but which it behoves Walter Sinclair to know. Leave us alone together, Edward.' Then, as his brother shook his head and frowned, he added, 'It is about his father, and his ears alone must hear it.'

'Then you can speak with him another time,' said Edward decisively; 'it will utterly upset you to do so now. Besides there is the luncheon bell, and it would be bad manners to detain Mr. Sinclair from his hostess, just after he has arrived. You know what a stickler she is about such matters.'

Walter had already had an experience of it, and at once hastened to take Mr. Roscoe's view of the matter.

'Nothing will give me greater pleasure,' he said to Richard gently, 'than to speak with you about my father; but, as your brother says, perhaps it will be better to wait for a more favourable opportunity.'

Richard scarcely seemed to hear what the other was saying. 'He would talk of you by the hour,' he said, as if buried in reminiscence. "My poor lad that I shall never see again," he used to call you. And he never did—he never did.' The speaker's chin fell forward on his breast, and he said no more.

'Come,' said Mr. Roscoe, taking the young man by the arm, 'let us leave my brother alone for a little. He is doing himself harm by all this talk.' Then, as they walked away together, he told his companion how tender-hearted his brother was ('it runs in our family,' he said, 'but I have more self-restraint'); and how greatly attached he had been to Walter's father. 'Nevertheless, my brother only knew him (as he told you) in his later years, during which, as I hear, you had no communication with your father.'

'That is quite true,' sighed the young man, 'I never saw him, nor heard of him, after he started to hunt in the prairie, till I got tidings of his death. He was killed by the Indians.'

'So I understand,' said Mr. Roscoe, a little drily for a member of such a tender-hearted family. 'Yonder are the ladies waiting for us, and also for their luncheon. I have noticed that the fair sex do not mind how late their guests are for dinner, but are very particular about the midday meal. It is doubtless because they are always taking little sips and snacks in the afternoon, and have no real appetite for the other.'

To look at Mr. Roscoe's smiling face, however, as it met those of his hostesses, you would have imagined he had just been passing

a eulogium upon all womankind. Nor were they backward in reciprocating his apparent chivalry. Agnes dowered him with an especially gracious look, as if anxious to make amends for her late outbreak; Philippa smiled on him with satisfaction, at the remembrance of that passage of arms, which she well knew, moreover, that he had not forgotten; and Grace was radiant, though it was true not so much on his account as on that of the guest he had brought with him.

'Where is Mr. Richard?' inquired Agnes, as they sat down to table.

And before even Mr. Roscoe's ready tongue could frame an excuse for his brother's absence, Mr. Richard himself made his appearance. Every trace of his recent emotion had disappeared. *His* face, too, was pleasant and smiling; though to an observant eye (and there was one upon him) his cheerfulness might have seemed a little feigned.

'I am glad to see you looking so much better, Mr. Richard,' said Agnes; 'now our little family circle is quite complete.' She glanced at Mr. Roscoe for approval, for the word 'family' had been put in to please him; partly as a compliment to himself and his brother, partly to carry out his views as respected Grace and Walter.

'It will certainly not be the fault of our hostess,' that gentleman returned earnestly, 'if it is not a happy one, and all does not go as merrily as a marriage bell.'

If a certain lawyer had been there, who was acquainted with the circumstances, he would probably have murmured to himself, 'What an infernal scoundrel!' but that individual was not present, and all who were seemed to receive the observation in a proper spirit. Curiously enough, however, the conversation presently reverted to him.

'Have you seen Mr. Allerton lately?' inquired Philippa of Walter.

'Yes; I saw him just before my departure from town, and he charged me with many kind messages to you ladies, which, except as to their general purport, I am very much afraid I have forgotten.'

'You had something else to think about, I dare say,' said Agnes, with another conciliatory glance at Mr. Roscoe.

'Or perhaps it was jealousy,' observed Philippa, with a sly look at Grace; 'some people don't like to give tender messages to ladies which have been entrusted to them by others. Not that

I feel the omission very poignantly on my own account,' she added, 'for my experience of Mr. Allerton is far from tender. In his character of trustee I find him very hard.' Here she suddenly flushed up, and came to a full stop. Mr. Roscoe had (I grieve to say it of one generally so polite to ladies) given her a kick under the table.

'I cannot say that of him,' remarked Agnes coldly. 'He always seems to me to exercise a very proper prudence.'

Mr. Roscoe's face grew livid; Agnes, perhaps purposely, was looking elsewhere and did not perceive it. 'You are a great friend of Mr. Allerton's, I believe, Mr. Sinclair,' she continued.

'He has been very kind to me at all events,' responded the young man warmly. 'Indeed I owe him a great deal, for, thanks to his good offices, when my Cumberland holiday is over, a position has been offered me in a certain firm, better than one so inexperienced as myself could have hoped for.'

'That is very good news,' observed Mr. Roscoe; and he spoke as if he meant it, as indeed he did, for the tidings suited well with his own plans.

'But at present, Mr. Sinclair,' put in Agnes graciously, 'you will have nothing to do, I trust, but to enjoy yourself.'

She really liked the young fellow, but was also very desirous to efface from his mind the impression which her conduct of the morning had only too probably made upon it.

'Indeed, Miss Tremenhare, with the recollection of your late river home in my mind,' he answered gratefully, 'I can imagine nothing but happiness under your roof.'

Walter meant what he said, but his words to those present, and who knew how life went on at Halswater, must have seemed, indeed, a strange stretch of fancy. There was a sudden silence, which he naturally attributed to another cause. 'I do not forget, however,' he continued with feeling, 'that at Elm Place you had a guest whom we shall all miss here.'

'Yes, poor Lord Cheribert,' said Agnes, 'how affable he was, was he not?' She was not generally so maladroit in her observations, but she was in a hurry to say something.

'So full of high spirits, I should rather call him,' observed Philippa decisively. 'One never remembered that he was a lord at all.'

This was not quite true, as regarded herself; for indeed she had never forgotten the fact, which gave her an unreasonable

pleasure, for a single instant; but to 'wipe her sister's eye,' as Mr. Roscoe called it, was a temptation she could never resist. Agnes bit her lip, angry with herself at her mistake, and furious with her reprover.

Unhappily, though he did not intend it, Mr. Roscoe's next observation followed Philippa's lead.

'Yes; one forgot his rank,' he said, 'in his attractive qualities; one called him "Cheribert" from the first; he was a capital fellow all round; it was a pity, however, that his great fortune went to the dogs, or rather to the horses.'

'Other people waste their money quite as foolishly,' observed Agnes drily, 'though not on the same follies.'

Again came that livid look on Mr. Roscoe's face which had overspread it by the lakeside that morning. If ever an angry woman could be warned, it should have had a warning in it.

'For my part,' said Grace, speaking for the first time, and with suppressed feeling, 'I shall never think of Lord Cheribert's follies. He had many and great temptations to which others are not exposed. His faults were on the surface; few kinder, nay, even nobler hearts than his ever beat in a human breast.'

'In that I must entirely agree with you,' said Walter earnestly; 'and if he had lived he would have proved it.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RICHARD'S STORY.

THERE was something—'there is always a something'—on Grace's mind, beside the happiness which well-nigh filled it, in the consciousness that it behoved her to write to Mr. Allerton to tell him of her engagement.

Her correspondence with him had been hitherto always of a pleasant kind, but she foresaw that what she had now to say would be far from pleasing to him. She liked the old lawyer very much—more perhaps than any one in the world with one exception—but she knew his weakness. He was liberal even to munificence with his own money; quite understood that the only true value of it lay in its power of doing good; but he set too great store upon it when it belonged to other people. Half his life had been passed in the endeavour to make men come by their own, or

to prevent what was theirs falling into other hands. Money was a sacred trust with him. If she had understood Mr. Allerton's real opinion of her sisters, and especially of Mr. Roscoe, she would have pictured to herself a far more vehement opposition; but, even as it was, she knew that he would oppose her views. She did not fear that he would offer any personal objection—indeed how *could* he, or for that matter could any one else?—but she felt that he would object to the pecuniary loss she would sustain by becoming Walter's wife. She had told Walter that the gulf between them was neither so wide nor so deep as he had imagined; and he had understood her as she knew (and meant him so to understand it) in the literal sense of her words. She had in reality referred to her indifference to the disparity of fortune between them; what he had imagined her to convey was that that disparity was not so very great; he was probably unaware that through her marriage with him she would forfeit her claim to an immense fortune; that nothing in fact would remain to her but the money she had saved since her father's death—much of which had gone in charity—and the 10,000*l.* he had left to her, let her marry whom she might. To what is called a chivalrous mind—but she knew it was not true chivalry; to a quixotic mind then, such as she feared that of Walter to be, the knowledge of all this might be fatal to his hopes. She felt that the longer it was delayed the better: that every day they passed in each other's society would make him more and more her own, and render it more difficult for him to give her up. The wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove (or the love bird) combined to prevent her communicating at present with Mr. Allerton; and she therefore forbore to do it. She had no fear of any one else telling him her secret. She was not so simple but that she perceived her sisters were very willing for their own sakes that she should marry Walter, and would certainly do nothing to obstruct it; and she blessed them for their greed.

In the meantime she had never been so happy.

Love took up the glass of Time and turned it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

If dear Papa could have only known her Walter and witnessed her happiness, was the only picture her imagination could form of an increase of bliss.

Many an evening by the waters (where, thank Heaven, were no ships)
Did their spirits meet together at the touching of the lips.

The loneliness of Halswater made it an admirable locality for such proceedings, and Walter Sinclair was no laggard in love: never was an engaged young couple more completely left to their own devices than they were. Walter was a *persona grata* to every one, even including Richard Roscoe. They might have noticed indeed (but they noticed nothing) that he avoided them when together, with even a greater consideration than did the rest of the household, and that he shrank still more from meeting Grace alone; but he not only cultivated Walter's society, but showed a particular kindness for the young fellow.

It was many days, however, before he made that revelation he had promised him on their first acquaintance, respecting his connection with his father.

The three men had been smoking together at the cottage one night as their custom was after they had bidden good-night to the ladies, and Edward Roscoe, feeling tired, had gone to his own room. There had ensued a long silence between the two who remained, Walter's thoughts, as usual, being occupied with Grace, while the other, as he slowly expelled the smoke from his lips, regarded his companion with earnest eyes and an expression which it would have been difficult to analyse, for it was made up of various emotions, and some of them antagonistic to one another—tenderness, remorse, and jealousy.

'Walter, my lad,' he presently said, in low grave tones, 'I hope we shall always be good friends whatever happens.'

'I hope so, indeed, Mr. Richard,' replied the young fellow, with a natural surprise. 'On my side at least it must always be so; not only on your own account but because you were my father's friend. I trust there is no reason why you should look forward, on your part, to any alteration in your feelings towards myself.'

'There will be no alteration, no,' answered the other with a heavy sigh. 'You will never do any harm to *me* more than you have already done.'

'And that is none,' returned Walter, with a light laugh, 'so I think our friendship is secure.'

He had not the least idea to what the other had alluded; but his strange remark had made little impression upon him; he was not easily impressed just now by observations made by any one, save one, and Richard had always seemed to him a queer fellow, who lived more in the past than the present, and who had a way of speaking not always quite to the purpose.

'Heaven grant that it may be so,' continued his companion with gentle earnestness, 'but you, at all events, have something to forgive *me*, my lad; for but for Richard Roscoe, your poor father would have been alive this moment.'

'What? Did you kill him then?' cried Walter, starting from his seat.

'I kill him? I who was his dearest friend! No; though in one sense would that I had. From my hand he would have welcomed death rather than—' He broke off with a shudder, and the whispered words, 'Ah, how can Heaven permit such things?'

Walter resumed his seat, and waited with patient anxiety for what might be coming. It was obviously useless to press his companion; the difficulty he found in making his communication at all was only too evident. His face was grey and bloodless, and a dew, as of death itself, had fallen on it.

'There are people, Walter,' he commenced slowly after a long pause, 'who will tell you that the American Indians are as other men, with the like feelings and emotions as ourselves, open to gratitude and moved by tenderness, and who can be influenced for good. I have lived among them for years, and can only say that I have never seen such a one. Within my experience, they have been all alike, treacherous, base, and heartless, and whenever the opportunity is offered of proving themselves so, incarnate fiends. They have many evil passions (as Heaven knows have we too), but one overmastering one, that of cruelty; a lust for barbarity more hellish than ever dwelt in a white man's breast. This they have not in war time only but at all times, and directed not necessarily against their enemies but against all the human race. Your father understood this thoroughly; before he became a hunter, you know, he was attached as a volunteer to a detachment of the United States army; and this, he told me, happened to a little drummer boy of his regiment who chanced to fall into the hands of the Apache Indians. He was but thirteen years old and a pretty boy, and he was given over to the tender mercies of the squaws. Everywhere else in the world almost such a captive would have excited pity in the breasts of women. *These* creatures did this: they stripped the child, tied him to a tree, and for four hours subjected him to every torture which their experience told them would not be fatal to him. Then they took pine knobs, and, splitting them in small splinters, stuck them all over his little body, till (as a spectator, a Mexican half-breed described it)

he looked like a porcupine, and set fire to them. They yelled and danced at his screams of anguish till he slowly died.'

'What a sickening tale!' exclaimed Walter, with marked disgust.

'No doubt,' replied the other drily, 'but if such things are so bad even to hear of, what must they be to endure? If Indians so use a harmless child, you may guess what they are capable of when their enemies are in their power; I say their enemies—though they treat helpless women even more devilishly than they treat men. However, it was an enemy of theirs with whom my story has to do.'

'Did my father fall into the power of such fiends?' exclaimed Walter excitedly.

'Listen. Your father and I were hunters of the plains for years together. He was a man of iron nerve and an excellent shot, but, so far as I know, he never took a human life unless his own was threatened. Many and many a time had we been attacked by these devils, and sent them howling to their hell; but we never sought them out, nor even pursued them. He was a quiet man, neither given to bloodthirstiness nor revenge. So was I at that time, Heaven knows. It is not so now.' Then he paused and poured himself out a glass of water; his hand trembled so violently that he could hardly carry it to his lips. 'I cannot speak of these things as I would wish to do,' he murmured apologetically; 'there is a fever in my heart, and in my brain. They make me mad. Yes; he spared many that he might have slain, though he well understood their natures. We were well armed of course; one night as we were putting by our revolvers, I noticed he had a pistol in his breast-pocket. "What is that for?" I asked. "It is for myself," he answered gravely; "if the worst should come to the worst, I will never fall into Indian hands alive. I know them," he added significantly.

'We had had a good season and were returning to the settlement; we had left the prairie behind us when it became necessary one evening to cross a river. It was in flood and dangerous, but the Sioux were about us, we knew, and there was better and safer camping ground on the other side of it. We rode our horses at the stream, but it proved too strong for us. There were rocks too in the river, and against one of these I was dashed by the current and unhorsed. The animal was carried down the stream, and I myself reached the bank with difficulty; I was much bruised and

had sprained my ankle. Your father with great exertion brought his horse safe to land, but, like myself, at the sacrifice of his weapons; our rifles and revolvers were lost; he had nothing but his pistol. Our situation was desperate indeed, for we felt only too certain that we had been watched by the Sioux. Had we had our arms, we should not have feared them, for they had had experience of their accuracy, and relied on opportunity alone for destroying us. Worthless though they be, these wretches never throw their own lives away. If we had had even our horses we could have escaped from them; but we had but one horse. *That* they knew, but not that we were defenceless, so that for the night we were left in peace, but not to rest. I sometimes think if we could have got rest that night, two lives might have been saved instead of one. The fatigue exhausted our strength. At the dawn of day we saw the Sioux; they had crossed the river, doubtless at some ford, and were coming towards us—some fifty mounted men. One held out a branch of a tree in token of amity. Your father smiled a bitter smile as he saw it. "They must think us in straits indeed," he said, "to suppose us willing to trust to their good faith." Then, turning to me, "There is not a moment to be lost, Richard. You are lame and cannot run a yard. You must take my horse and ride for Railton (the nearest fort)."

"What, and leave you to the tender mercies of these hell-hounds?" I answered.

"Not so," he said, "I have my pistol, remember; it is but death at the worst. Moreover, by taking to the scrub yonder, I hope to keep ahead of them all, and save my scalp. You, of course, must keep to the open. My horse is a better one than was ever crossed by a Sioux. If you reach home with a whole skin, you will come back and look for me."

"But you are throwing away your life for mine?" I cried.

"Mount and ride, man. Every moment of delay is risking both our lives." He helped me on to his horse—for I was so stiff as well as lame that I could hardly move—with his own hands, and off we started, he for the scrub and I for the open. That was the last I saw of your father—alive.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE STORY CONTINUED.

‘WHY do you not go on?’ inquired Walter, after a long silence, which his companion showed no disposition to break.

‘There is a reason for it,’ answered the other hoarsely; ‘it would spare both of us if I said no more. Nevertheless, you have a right to hear all—if you wish it.’

Walter inclined his head; he felt too sick at heart to speak.

‘Well, the good horse saved me from the Sioux, as he would have saved his master. They followed me for two days and then gave up the chase. On the third morning I reached the post, half dead with hunger and fatigue; but in an hour I was in the saddle again following my own tracks with five-and-twenty mounted volunteers. The fever of my soul sustained me. The thought of your father and of what he had done for me, and of what might have happened to him, filled my veins with fire. I slept at times upon my horse, but the men who were with me never lost the trail. Since your father had been bound for the same post, and we did not meet with him, I felt only too sure that he had not escaped with life. The best that we could look for, as I was well convinced, was to find his dead body, with a pistol bullet in it. But, alas, that was not to be. We searched as well as we could, always, however, moving quickly, till we came upon the scrub which I had seen him enter. To look for him there would have taken too much time, and it would be easy to return to it. The Indians had retired across the river; we found the ford and followed them.’ Here Richard Roscoe paused and wiped his face, on which a ghastly dew was gathering. ‘Shall I go on?’ he murmured.

‘Go on,’ answered Walter, in tones that no one who knew him would have recognised for his own; his voice was frozen with the horror that had seized his companion, though he was ignorant of what was to come.

‘Three miles or so from the river, we found what had once been a man, and your father. His head alone was above the earth, the rest of him they had buried standing. His poor limbs were bound with ropes. They had scalped him; they had cut off his lips, his eyelids, his nose and ears, and had left him then—still alive as we afterwards discovered—to be driven mad by the hot

sun beating on his head, and to be revived for fresh tortures, by the cool air of the morning; Hell only knows for how long.'

Walter groaned.

'A hunter who heard of it from the fiends themselves says "the warrior" who invented this torture was thought very highly of by the tribe. There were not many left before we had done with them to praise him. This hand, palsied as it looks, slew seven of them!'

'Let me take it,' cried Walter hoarsely. He took it and kissed it.

'Yet, but for me, your father might have been alive, lad; and I should have suffered in his stead. Do you indeed forgive me?'

'Yes; if you had been in his place you would have done as he did.'

'I hope so; I think so; but he *did* it. If I ever forget it, I shall deserve to fall into Indian hands. Do you wonder now why I hate Indians?'

'But the pistol?' groaned Walter, unable to entertain any abstract subject in the whirl and horror of his personal feelings. 'Why did he not shoot himself?'

'I suppose the powder had got wet when he crossed the river. What are you doing, lad?'

The young man had passed quickly into his own room, and through the open door could be seen placing things in his port-manteau—a revolver was the first of them.

'I am going away. I leave to-morrow for America!'

Richard rose, went into the other room, and laid his hand upon his arm.

'No,' he said, 'that way madness lies; look at me and do not doubt it.'

Walter looked up and beheld a face he did not know; pallid with hate, distorted with passion: a livid face—and also one in which, it was plain, reason had no longer a place.

'Do you suppose I have not done all that could be done,' shouted this apparition, and then laughed aloud. 'Seven with my own hand, and six times as many more by those of my men. There is not one of them alive: not one, not one. Will you make war against a race with your single arm? Leave that to me. You are not a madman as I am. Can't you see it? Come, come,' he continued, drawing his now unresisting companion back into the smoking-room, and speaking in less vehement tones.

'You must keep your wits for other things; for you may need them. No. There has been mischief enough already done. Your father's torments have not been unavenged; the man for whom he sacrificed his life has had his sufferings too—and because of him. Above all things never breathe one word to *her* about your father's death. Do you hear me?'

'Whom do you mean by *her*?'

'Why, Grace, of course; our Grace. It would distress her.'

'Of course I shall never tell her.'

'You think so now; but perhaps at some other time; in years to come. Swear to me you will never tell her how I took your father's horse and rode away from him, and left him to his doom. Swear it.'

'I swear I never will.'

'I am satisfied; you are your father's son, and he never lied to me. Now let us talk of something else.'

The speaker's face had suddenly changed; the fire had fled from it, and also the remorse and pain; he looked like one exhausted even to the verge of death, but who after a paroxysm of excitement had returned to his right mind. The spectacle in some sort relieved his companion from the distress which the other's recital had caused him: was it possible, he wondered for the moment, whether the man was not a madman, and had imagined the whole hideous story; though he came to the conclusion that this was not the case, but rather that the recollection of so shocking an incident had affected his brain. The idea turned his thoughts into another channel. If the poor fellow should be subject, as he had himself confessed, to lose his reason, might he not prove dangerous to Grace? She was evidently a subject of regard to his disordered mind. His solicitude that she should not hear the story might be accounted for by the part he had himself played, but what did he mean by that strange expression 'our Grace'? It was a slight matter, but the least suspicion of danger in connection with so dear a being, alarmed him. There had hitherto not been the slightest kink or hitch in the smooth course of their true love, and he was the more inclined on that account to exaggerate the smallest obstacle to it.

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It was with great dissatisfaction, therefore, that he heard his companion presently return to the subject which he had himself spoken of as closed.

'It may be necessary, my lad,' said Richard, as if moved by

an afterthought, 'to speak of your father to you once again; but I see how the matter distresses you, as well it may, and I promise you it shall be for the last time.'

'Indeed,' returned the other earnestly, 'I do not wish to hear it. What has been told me is sufficient, and more than sufficient. You were quite right to tell it me, and I thank you for the confidence that has cost you so dearly; but since, as you have justly pointed out, retribution is out of my power to exact, I entreat you to be silent on the matter, which can only cause me more distress and pain.'

'Poor lad,' answered the other with gentle gravity; 'perhaps it may not be necessary for me to speak; let us hope it may not for both our sakes. It is very late; good night; and may you have no such dreams as I have.'

Walter had no dreams that night for he had no sleep. The fate of his father, and the possibility of danger to Grace—or at the best of great distress of mind if she should come to hear of what had been confided to him, divided his waking thoughts. It is true that Richard had himself enjoined upon him silence on the subject; but what trust could be reposed in one so strange and excitable? it was even possible that he might tell the story to her with his own lips by way of penance for what he considered (though such an imputation was itself a proof of a disordered mind) his base behaviour. On the whole he decided to warn her of Richard, but in a way that should not arouse any serious apprehensions. The next day, therefore, he took an opportunity, while walking with her alone, of asking her how she liked her guest at the cottage.

'I like the poor fellow very much,' she replied frankly, 'better, indeed, than his brother, though we have known him so much longer.'

'Then why, since he has won your regard, my dear,' he answered smiling, 'should he be called a poor fellow?'

'Well,' returned Grace, with a little hesitation, 'he is an invalid, you know. One cannot but pity one who, though so far from old age, has lost the activity and strength that he manifestly once possessed. As he once told me with his own lips, he is the mere wreck of his former self. You are not jealous, *are you?*' she added slyly, 'that Mr. Richard has given me his confidences?'

'Not at all,' said Walter with a laugh, which was, however, rather forced, for her reply had chimed in with his apprehensions; 'but is there no other reason why you pity him?'

'Well, if you compel me to say so, I fear that the fatigues and privations he has endured have affected his mind as well as his body.'

'But you don't fear him, I hope,' inquired Walter anxiously.

'Certainly not; I believe he has a sincere regard for me. But there is no doubt that his manner is at times exceedingly eccentric.'

'Yes; some subjects excite him in the strangest manner; he is not himself when he talks about them, and all allusion to them should be discouraged. I want you to be careful, my darling, about that—for his sake, of course.'

'I will be very careful; but what are the subjects?'

'Well, there is one, for example, which if he attempt to speak to you upon, I beg that you will decline to listen to him. Would you mind saying at once and peremptorily that it is distasteful to you?'

'I am quite sure that if I even hinted at it being so, it would be dropped at once. Mr. Richard, despite some drawbacks patent to everybody, is at heart a gentleman, and moreover would, I am convinced, respect any wish of mine.'

'Very good, then don't let him talk to you about the American Indians.'

'The American Indians?' echoed Grace, with amazement.

'Yes; it seems ludicrous enough, of course, but he has, not without reason, a great detestation of them. He has doubtless suffered at their hands, but his views upon the subject are exaggerated, and between ourselves by no means trustworthy. You must never be frightened by anything he tells you about them, but what will be much your safest way is to refuse to listen to him. When he gets upon that topic he is in my opinion not a responsible being. I hope I have not alarmed you, my darling,' for Grace had turned rather pale; 'there is no danger to be apprehended, of course, but I wish to save you from hearing what may be unpleasant, and which at the same time would be harmful to the poor man himself.'

'I am not the least afraid, Walter,' she answered quietly, 'and will take care to use the precaution you have recommended.'

They went on to talk of other subjects, and Walter, no doubt, thought he had reason to congratulate himself on his skilful diplomacy. But his revelation had filled Grace's mind with recollections and suspicions of which he little guessed. She was under a promise to Richard, as we know, to be silent about his extra-

ordinary behaviour during their drive in the pony carriage, but the cause of it was no longer inexplicable to her. The strange noise they had heard as they approached the circus was no doubt the war whoop of the Indians, which had probably awakened some dreadful reminiscence in Richard Roscoe's mind. She recalled his look of horror and, as she now understood it, of undying hate when it fell upon his ear. Another thing, too, occurred to her which moved her even more—the attempt which, if his story was to be believed, had been made upon the life of the Indian on the fells. Was it possible that Richard Roscoe was the person who had assaulted him? The man's account of the affair had been received with incredulity, from the total absence of motive for such a crime. But if what she had just heard was true, there *was* a motive, and one that could have actuated one individual only in that neighbourhood; namely, Richard himself. She could not look upon him as a murderer, even in intent; her whole soul shrank from it; but the only alternative was irresistible, and filled her with vague alarms. On one point, at least—and why not on others—their guest at the cottage was a madman.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A CHANGE OF FRONT.

IN his various characters as friend of the family, confidential adviser, and major domo, at Halswater, Mr. Edward Roscoe exercised a great many rights and privileges which no one ever thought of disputing; and among them was the unimportant but delicate office of opening the letter-bag, of which he kept the key. The post, as has been mentioned, came somewhat late in the day, so that instead of the family correspondence arriving as usual at breakfast time, and being displayed in public, it was brought to Mr. Roscoe, generally alone in his private sitting-room at the time, and distributed subsequently with his own gracious hands. Heaven forbid we should hint that he took any undue advantage of the circumstance, but it naturally happened that he knew who got letters, and also who sent them away. He knew, for example, that Grace had not yet written to Mr. Allerton since Walter's arrival, and secretly applauded her for that maidenly reticence. He had much correspondence of his own, too, which it was highly

undesirable should be laid upon the breakfast-table, and altogether the arrangement was a very convenient one.

On a certain morning, when the bag had been brought to him as usual, and, as usual, before unlocking it, he had locked his door, among its contents was a letter from America, addressed to his brother. 'So it's come at last, has it?' was his muttered observation, as he took the envelope in his hand and examined it attentively. 'What on earth made the fool seal it?'

The observation seemed uncalled for, for though it is now unusual to seal letters, to do so is not a proof of folly; and in some instances indeed the contrary. There was a little kettle on his fire—for he was a man who liked his coffee hot, and at irregular hours—and he now looked at it with an expression of great irritation. The fact was the kettle was useful to him in opening gummed envelopes, but of no use at all in opening sealed ones. Was it worth while to take the impression of this particular seal—which only bore initials on it—before breaking it or not? Considering it was only Richard's letter, a fellow who took no notice of such little matters, he thought it was not worth while; he would melt the wax, and after possessing himself of the contents of the epistle, fasten it down again with a blank seal. It was a simple operation, and one to which he was well accustomed; he melted the seal and opened the envelope. It contained a short official note to his brother, just saying, 'I forward you what you left with me,' with a banker's name attached and the enclosure. This latter was another envelope also sealed, directed 'To my dear son, Walter, to be delivered into his own hands.' 'Not just yet, however,' was Mr. Roscoe's grim remark, as he melted this second seal. Then he read the enclosure. The effect of its perusal was remarkable. What he said cannot be written, because it was an execration of extreme violence, uttered 'not loud but deep,' but what he did was to stamp upon the ground with impotent rage. His countenance was white with the white heat of fury, and the consciousness of baffled schemes. His eyes flashed fire. His first impulse was to burn the letter, but even as he held it over the glowing coals, he hesitated, and at that moment he heard Miss Agnes's voice at the door of the cottage asking if the letters had come.

In an instant he had thrown it into his open desk, and locked the desk, and came out to her, smiling, with the opened bag in his hand.

‘There are no letters for you, Miss Agnes, and I, too, have been neglected by my correspondents; but there is one for Miss Grace—I fancy from Mr. Allerton.’

The word ‘fancy’ was a pretty touch, for the lawyer’s hand was as familiar to him as his own, and many a letter from him had he read, though he had never been one of his correspondents. If he had read this one, which he had had no time to do, it would have given him less dissatisfaction than some others, which, indeed, had spoken of Mr. Edward Roscoe with more freedom than friendship.

Agnes held him in honeyed talk, as was her wont when she got him alone; and to see his eyes and his smile as they replied to her, one would have thought the lady very dear to him, and never have guessed the impatience which her presence evoked, and far less the passion that was consuming him in which she had no part at all. At last he got rid of her and returned to his own room, a different man from him who had last entered it. An hour ago, though there was much to trouble him, and obstacles in his path that would have daunted a less determined spirit, the immediate matter which he had in hand had been going well and prosperously. It was only an initial difficulty in his far-reaching plans, it is true, but to find one impediment in course of removal had been a satisfaction to him; and lo! instead of its being swept away, it had assumed even greater proportions, and all the work he had had with it had now, under far less encouraging circumstances, to be done over again. In vain he pulled at his cigar, not for comfort (comfort even from the soothing weed was not for such as he), but for ideas—how to meet this unexpected blow, and especially how to turn it, as he had often done in the case of such disappointments, to his own profit. For nearly an hour he could find no way out of the maze of difficulty, and only confused himself in his efforts to find it; but at last he hit upon a plan. It was a dangerous, even a desperate one, and, what was worst of all, required the connivance and assistance of others; but, having once grasped it, his hold on it grew more tenacious with every moment of possession. It is a characteristic of men of his class, fertile in schemes, sanguine of success, and confident in their own powers of persuasion, that nothing but total and complete failure can make them doubt of the practicability of their plans. What is also an attribute of theirs is promptness; not an hour, not a minute, do they waste in putting them into

execution. Taking the fateful scroll (or scrawl, for it was written in shaky and ill-formed characters, significant of a tumult of anxieties in the writer's mind) from the desk, he placed it carefully in his breast pocket, and sought the presence of the very person from whom he had of late so gladly parted, Agnes Tremenhare.

Each of the elder sisters had, like Grace, her own boudoir, and there was no sort of difficulty—for he had often certain business of a private character to transact with both of them—in seeing his hostess alone. She received him even more cordially than usual, for his business was not always of a welcome character, and as he had had no letters from town that day she justly concluded that it was not on business that he came. It was soon made plain, however, that he had not come on pleasure.

'Agnes,' he said, as soon as he had closed the door behind him, 'a great misfortune has happened to us—or so, at least, it at first seemed to me. Before telling you how I propose to meet it, and even turn it to our advantage, I wish you to be informed exactly of its nature. Read *this*,' and, without more words, he placed the missive that had been sent to his brother in her unflinching hand.

When not moved by jealousy or wrong, Agnes Tremenhare was cold and calculating enough. Her disposition, indeed, though far gentler, was almost as practical as that of Mr. Roscoe himself, and of this he was well aware. He was convinced that of the various persons with whom he was compelled to deal upon the present occasion, Agnes would be the least difficult to manage, and the most likely to fall in with his views. Nevertheless, it was with satisfaction that, as he watched her face attentively as she read, he saw it harden, after the first flush of surprise, and assume an expression of unswerving determination.

'You know what this means, of course, as regards ourselves,' he said, 'and also Philippa' (this he added incidentally), 'if what we once thought so advisable should come to pass?'

'It would be the perpetration of an infamy,' she answered, in a voice hoarse with rage. 'It would be giving effect to a most wicked wrong.'

'No doubt; and therefore we must take measures to put a stop to it.'

'It will be very difficult, Edward, as well as cruel, now that matters have gone so far.'

There was a touch of softness in her tone, and though only a touch it alarmed him.

'Of course it will be difficult,' he answered, with grim contempt. 'As to the cruelty, that is all nonsense; I mean, of course' (for he saw a flush of indignation glow on his companion's face), 'that a girl like Grace is too young to know her own mind, and will not suffer as you and I would do under similar circumstances. For all that she has said, I still believe that she had a tenderness for Cheribert, and if this Sinclair was got rid of, she would find some other man equally to her mind. Let us confine ourselves to the difficulty. It is great, I admit, but not insuperable. The question I have come to ask you is whether you are prepared to see the vast fortune your father left behind him pass out of the family, or into one branch of it——'

'I am not,' she put in quickly. 'I will never submit to such a wrong if I can help it. There is nothing I would not do—provided, of course, that it were not itself a wrong—to prevent its commission.'

'That is spoken like yourself, Agnes,' said Mr. Roscoe approvingly. 'I only hope I shall find others, to whom I must also look for assistance, as just and reasonable.'

'Others? Do you mean Philippa?' she answered with knitted brow.

'Well, you see, my dear, her interests are equally threatened by this document with your own. We must all put our shoulders to the wheel, and work together for once.'

'We shall hardly have Grace with us, however,' observed Agnes drily. 'I am truly sorry to have to treat the dear girl in any way as an antagonist. But she ought to be able to see for herself, how unfair and infamous——'

'So she would,' put in Mr. Roscoe hastily; 'if her eyes were not blinded by her love for Walter she would be the first to see it; we shall be in fact only working in the same interests as herself—namely in those of Truth and Justice—if she were in a position to look at the matter from an unprejudiced standpoint. As it is, however, she must know nothing about this,' and he tapped the document with his finger.

'And Richard?'

'Well, of course, Richard must never know. Why should he? The thing has been lost in the post, and there is no duplicate.'

'Must it really be so? I hate deceit, Edward.'

‘So do I; but I hate injustice more—to those I love,’ he added tenderly.

‘When you say that, Edward, you make me feel for our poor Grace more than ever,’ said Agnes softly. ‘Yet, as you say, there seems no other way out of it. How is it you propose to break off the match?’

‘Leave that to me, my dear, just for the present; I wish to avoid distressing your tender heart more than is absolutely necessary. When I need your help I will tell you all. But in the meantime you must gradually—very gradually—cease your civilities to Mr. Sinclair. He is sharp enough in taking a hint, so be very careful not to give him an opportunity of asking you the reason of your change of manner. Indeed I am going to take him in hand myself, so that he will probably not think it necessary to put that question. You must drop him as gently as if he was made of glass, but never let Grace herself perceive that you are dropping him. Her too, poor dear, I shall have to deal with, using, however, arguments very different from those in his case. Many difficulties lie before me, as you may suppose, Agnes, but you shall see that they are not insuperable.’

‘You are a wonder, Edward,’ she exclaimed with admiration. ‘It is your marvellous gift of persuasion that makes me sometimes doubt of you myself.’

‘Great Heavens, do you mean that you think I would deceive *you*, Agnes?’ he exclaimed with indignation. ‘This is a poor return indeed for long and loving service.’

‘I only said sometimes, Edward,’ she replied affectionately; ‘you must not be hasty with your Agnes, even though she is sometimes hasty with you.’

‘It is not your haste, my dear, but your impatience that I object to,’ he answered with a smile; ‘the present obstacle, however, will not, as you doubtless fear, delay our happiness, if all goes well with my plan.’

‘I am glad to hear it indeed, for I am sick of delays, Edward,’ she answered, laying her jewelled hand upon his shoulder tenderly.

‘And so am I, dear Agnes,’ and to do him justice he looked sick.

(To be continued.)

A SLAVE-DEALER OF 1690.

AT a time when the continent of Africa is attracting so much attention, owing to the recent discoveries of that indefatigable explorer, Mr. H. M. Stanley, some letters written at the close of the seventeenth century by a European resident on the Gold Coast, and descriptive of the only portion of Central Africa then known, are of more than ordinary interest, as showing the light in which the continent was regarded at that time, and as affording means for judging how much progress, if any, has been made by the negro races during the two hundred years which have elapsed since that period. The writer of these letters, Bosman, was of Dutch extraction and had peculiar facilities for acquiring a knowledge of the native tribes of that part of Africa. He went out there as clerk to a Dutch trading firm about the year 1686, and lived on the coast for fourteen years. By his superior business abilities he soon rose to be chief agent for his company, in which position he had opportunities of visiting all the principal places which were then in existence in the Gulf of Guinea. Bosman was of observant character, and describes all he saw, and his manner of life, in long and carefully-written letters to a friend in Holland. In these he gives an account of each of the different places, such as Elmina, Cape Coast Castle, Accra, and Badagry—at which he lived; but he devotes by far the most space to a description of Fida, the modern Whydah, which he seems to have preferred to any other place, and as its inhabitants, although, perhaps, a little in advance of them in social customs and manners, are sufficiently characteristic of the others, an examination of this portion of his letters will give a fair idea of the peculiarities of all the tribes of which he writes.

Bosman stayed at Fida on three different occasions, and received on each occasion a very favourable impression of it. The difficulty seems to have been to get to it. The surf was worse at Fida than at any other part of that surf-beaten coast, and from April to July the sea became so violent that any attempt to land was at the imminent risk of life. Bosman states that in one year five Europeans were drowned at this port, and declares that in his time alone it had cost his company several hundred pounds

worth of goods.¹ In addition to the surf there was an easterly current which at times ran so strong that it was impossible to propel a boat or canoe against it, thus forming another obstacle in getting ashore. Once landed, however, the adventurer was fully rewarded for the dangers he had incurred, for he found himself in a most beautiful country, as remarkable for its natural advantages as for the prosperity of its inhabitants.

The country of Fida had ten miles—Dutch miles, presumably—of sea front, and ran inland to an average distance of seven miles. This small area was exceedingly fertile, and so populous that the villages in many places were contiguous. The huts were made of bamboo with round thatched roofs, and enclosed with fencing, while magnificent tropical trees planted with design enhanced the beauty of the prospect: 'to render which,' says Bosman, 'the more charming and perfectly agreeable, not so much as one mountain or hillock interposeth to interrupt the view'—a criticism very characteristic of a Dutchman whose earliest ideas of beauty in natural scenery were drawn from the level expanses of Holland. The land rose, it appears, from the seashore in an ascent so gradual as to be almost imperceptible till after three or four hours' journey, when, turning round, a magnificent view of the country could be obtained; so enchanting, indeed, that Bosman declares his conviction that no other country in the world could show the like.

With regard to the inhabitants of the country, they are described as being, without exception, civil and obliging to white men, in which they had an excellent example set them by their king. Their bearing, too, towards each other was marked with courtesy, distinctions of rank being observed, and the inferior showing respect to the superior. Deference was paid by the wife to her husband, by the son to his father, and even by the younger brother to his elder brother. If a person of inferior rank met one of a higher rank in the street he would prostrate himself till his superior had passed by. With this regard of ceremony was

¹ The Gold Coast still maintains an unenviable notoriety for danger in this respect. When the writer of this article visited, in the April of 1889, a small place called Grand Bassam, on the same coast, and about three hundred miles west of Whydah, he was informed that, within only the three previous months, no less than eight natives had, on different occasions, lost their lives through the upsetting of the surf-boats. Some three or four years ago, the Chief Justice of the Gold Coast was drowned whilst attempting to land at Accra, and fatal accidents of this character are still of but too frequent occurrence at that place.

mixed a certain amount of superstition. When any one sneezed, all those around him dropped on to their knees, kissed the earth, clapped their hands, and wished him every happiness and prosperity. In a country where the temperature varied so little, it is to be presumed that colds were of comparatively rare occurrence, or there must have ensued grave interruption to state ceremonies and palavers during an epidemic of this common European malady.

The Fidasians were a very industrious people, every one being engaged in work, the men in trade and the women in the plantations. Several handicrafts, such as spinning, weaving, and metal-work, were known to them, but by far the larger portion of them were employed in trading for slaves. Their chief failing appears to have been an inability to conceive the essential difference existing between 'meum and tuum' in respect of every kind of property. Bosman relates that in his first interview with the king, his majesty assured him that he would never have any reason to be alarmed for his personal safety among the people of Fida; but with regard to the safety of his goods, that was another matter, and he would have to guard them carefully, for he frankly confessed that his subjects were great thieves, and could keep their hands from nothing which was left within their reach.

For this warning the Dutch trader soon found that there was only too much occasion. The distance from the beach, where the goods were landed, to the king's village, where they had to be stored, was three miles. They were packed in separate bundles and carried that distance by the natives. Although a package often weighed as much as a hundred pounds, the carriers would put them on their heads and run the whole way with them, without any apparent inconvenience. Over such a long route, however, it was impossible to maintain a strict watch, and, at the end of the day, a large percentage of the property would be missing. When Bosman taxed them, during his first visit, with this misappropriation, they did not deny the fact, but quietly asked if the white man thought they would work so hard all day for such small wages—only a few pence—if they did not have the liberty to help themselves as well. To such an extent was this vice a primary instinct of their character, that on the death of their king, taking advantage of the temporary suspension of authority, they would all openly set about stealing from each other, without considering that in a community where all are thieves no one is

likely to be much the gainer. Bosman was robbed consistently the whole of the time he was with them, and says in despair that the only way he could think of to put a stop to it would be to leave the country altogether.

With regard to its supply of the article of commerce in which he dealt, Bosman has nothing to say of Fida, now Whydah, but unqualified praise. He declares that whereas at Little Popo—which he calls a ‘wretched place,’ probably on account of the absence of this class of merchandise—he could only get three slaves in as many days, at Fida he could soon procure a couple of thousand, and fill four ships in five or six weeks. Some of the conditions by which the trade was governed are worth noting. Before a single slave changed masters, the king demanded four hundred pounds down for each ship for the privilege of being allowed to trade with his subjects at all. Considering that fifty ships, on an average, called at Fida in the year, the king must have received no small revenue from this tribute alone, and it fully corroborates the accounts of his great riches and prosperity. The next stipulation imposed on the white slave-dealer was that, before trading with any one else, he should buy all the slaves which the king himself happened to have in stock, for which his majesty used to charge about one-fourth more than the market value. When the king had replenished his exchequer by these two methods of extortion, the trader was at length free to bargain with the other slave-owners at any terms he could arrange.

For the facilitating of these transactions, a regular slave-market was held, to which the slaves—who were mostly prisoners of war—were brought out in chains from the barracoons in which they were confined. Here they were examined by the ship’s surgeon, and all that were defective in sight or limb were set aside, and the rest were bidden for at a certain rate per head, the women being a fourth or fifth part cheaper than the men. When the bargain was satisfactorily concluded they were branded with a red-hot iron with the arms or name of the company by which they had been bought, and were taken off to the ship at once.

In this description, the inveterate slave-dealer, hardened though he must have been by long association with its barbarities, seems to have had some misgivings as to the view which would be taken of the trade by his friend at home in Holland, to whom his letters were addressed. Accordingly, he attempts a half-hearted apology for some of the little details which he thought

might appear in any way revolting. 'I doubt not,' he says, 'but that this trade seems very barbarous to you, but since it is followed by mere necessity, it must go on;' though what the necessity was, beyond the love of making money, does not sufficiently appear. He then puts in a special plea for the humanity of his own firm: 'Yet we take all possible care that they are not burned too hard, especially the women, who are more tender than the men.'

Dismissing the cruel practice of branding with this wholly satisfactory statement, he proceeds in a light-hearted way to give a description of life on board a slave-ship. 'You would really wonder,' he exclaims to his ingenuous correspondent, 'to see how these men live on board!' As many as six or seven hundred were put on each ship—a number which, when the small size of the trading vessels of those days is taken into consideration, gives one some idea of the shocking overcrowding which must have been practised. They were stowed between decks, the men separate from the women, but all in chains, and as close together as it was possible to pack them. Yet everything, he declares, at any rate on the Dutch ships, was clean and orderly, and the slaves well taken care of, being fed as often as three times a day. Under this generous treatment Bosman was at a loss to understand how it was that every now and then revolts occurred amongst them. The only reason he could give was that 'these silly fellows' had got an idea that they had been brought down to the coast to be fattened and eaten by the white men, a belief which would of course sufficiently account for their conduct. He mentions that the Portuguese, who, even at that early date, had acquired a name for mismanagement on the coast, had lost four ships in one year, owing to the rising of the slaves on board of them.

For the King of Fida Bosman entertained a very high opinion. He was about fifty years of age at the time that the trader knew him, but in appearance he was as young and sprightly as a man of thirty-five. In character, Bosman declares that he was the most civil and generous negro that he had ever met, and was never better pleased than when a white man desired a favour of him. 'It would be easy,' the Dutchman continues, 'to obtain whatever we ask of him, if a parcel of rascally flatterers did not continually buzz lessons of good husbandry in his ears, not so much for his good as for their own advancement.'

Among his subjects the king was regarded as a demigod, a belief which he encouraged by never eating in public, and by keeping secret his private quarters in the royal palace. When Bosman first visited Fida he asked one of the king's chief captains in what part of the palace the king slept, and received in reply another question: 'Where doth God lodge?' The king's presence was so awe-inspiring among his people, that with a single word he could make them tremble. This feeling, however, like all others with the happy, careless negro, was only a transitory one, and disappeared with the object that gave rise to it; 'for as soon as his back is turned they forget their fear, not much regarding his commands, and always knowing how to appease and delude him with a lie or two.'

The Fidasians, in proportion as they exceeded other negroes in their love of trade, also surpassed them in their dislike of war, and in their fear of death in any form. To such an extent did this feeling possess them, that the mere mention of that 'last debt to nature' filled them with alarm, and any one who by accident spoke of it in the presence of the king was at once taken out and despatched, to prevent him ruffling again, if only for a few minutes, his royal master's peace of mind. It happened that when Bosman was leaving Fida at the end of his first residence there, the king was in the trader's debt to the amount of one hundred pounds. Bosman did not wish to press him for it then, but, with the provident instinct of a shrewd business man, he asked him to whom he should apply on his return for the payment of the debt, supposing his majesty had in the meantime died. The cool directness of this question in a court where the death of any one, even the king's enemies, was a forbidden subject, produced an indescribable amazement among the chiefs, who were at first so dumbfounded at the white man's audacity that they could not find expression for their horror. But they soon collected their senses, and might have made things very uncomfortable for the rash Dutchman, had not the king, with whom he was a great favourite, come to his rescue, and extricated him from the difficulty by saying, with a smile of confident foreknowledge, 'Be reassured. I shall not die.'¹

¹ During Bosman's subsequent visits, however, when he got to know the natives better, he would rally them with their fear of death, and so far familiarised them with the mention of it, that the king, 'who is a very jolly fellow, would laugh outright about it, especially when I frightened any of his captains with it.'

As we have related, Bosman was much struck by the exceeding denseness of the population which inhabited this small country. On a closer acquaintance with the people he ceased to wonder why there were so many, but rather why there were so few. The least number of wives owned by the lowest class of natives he found to be forty or fifty, while the captains possessed three or four hundred each, and the king reached the grand total of five thousand. In spite of these large numbers, the smallest of which would be beyond the dreams of the most uxorious European, the Fidasian husband was exceedingly jealous about each and every one of his numerous wives. On the slightest suspicion of infidelity the wife was sold into slavery, and the paramour, if discovered, was similarly treated, except when implicated with the wife of a captain or the king, when he was immediately put to death.

The king's wives were objects of special care to himself and of enforced veneration to his people. The favourite ones lived in the palace with him; the others were accommodated in adjoining buildings. No men were employed in the royal household, and the king was served solely by his wives. When visitors came to see the king he received them alone, taking good care that his wives were out of sight. It was, indeed, held a sacrilege to so much as look at any of these royal spouses. When repairs, which could not be done by them, were needed in the palace, they migrated from the affected portion, and the plumbers and glaziers coming in had to keep on shouting out the whole time they were at work, in case any of the wives, not acquainted with the fact of their presence, should happen to pass that way. When the king's wives set out to work in the plantations, which they did every morning in batches of three to four hundred at a time, they used to cry 'Stand clear' as they went, and any men who were in their path prostrated themselves, and did not dare to raise their eyes till they had passed.

On account of the awe in which his wives were held, the king found them a very useful and speedy executive to carry out his commands. If any person was found guilty of a crime the king sent a detachment of his wives round to the man's house in order to strip it of its goods and pull it down. This was usually very soon effected, for on the approach of the king's wives the man was unable to remain and defend his property. One instance, however, is related by Bosman, in which a native was clever and bold

enough to thwart this powerful authority. Hearing that he had been accused before the king, and that a company of the king's wives had been sent to wreck his house, he collected all the gunpowder he possessed, and, placing it in a heap just beneath his doorway, he awaited the arrival of his spoilers, firebrand in hand. When they approached and cried in the usual formula 'Make way for the king's wives,' he replied that he would not stir from the spot on which he stood, and that if they attempted to cross his threshold he would blow himself and all of them up together. This threat brought the good women to a halt, and after a consultation among themselves they determined to return to the king and inform him of the reception they had met. But their intended victim was too quick for them. Slipping round another way, he reached the king first, and cleared himself of the accusation so satisfactorily that the order against him was countermanded. This attempt, Bosman remarks, was a very bold one, requiring great nerve to carry it through successfully, considering that if it had failed a painful death would have been the punishment.

The king's supply of wives was kept up to the full number by three of his chief captains, who had very little else to do than select and procure for him the most beautiful virgins. A fresh wife, after presentation, lived with the king three or four days, after which she was relegated to the quarters occupied by the other wives, and became, practically, a nun for the rest of her life, with the unenviable privilege of working like a slave on the king's estate. Under these circumstances it is not a matter of surprise that the honour of a royal alliance was little coveted among maidens, some of whom had even been known to prefer a speedy death to the distinction. Bosman mentions the story of a young girl who, having been selected for this purpose by the captains, ran away, and on being closely pursued, in her despair jumped down a well and was killed. 'I leave her case,' remarks the sage historian, 'to be determined by the ladies.'

When each man was so well provided in respect of wives, it was but natural that his children should be proportionately numerous. Bosman had heard, in several cases, incredible numbers ascribed to one man; but doubting the truth of the statements, he one day took aside a chief on whose word he could rely, and asked him to tell him candidly how many children he himself possessed. This was evidently a tender point with the chief, for he seemed

pained, and at length with a sigh, apparently of regret, he said: 'I must confess that I have only seventy children now living, but I have had as many more who are dead.' A hundred and forty was evidently a small number in his estimation, and quite unworthy of a captain of his rank, most of his compeers possessing at least two hundred. Indeed, he assured Bosman that there was one man who, with his sons and grandsons alone, rose up and defeated a powerful enemy who was coming against the king. This family numbered two thousand men, besides women and children and many who had died.

With regard to the king's children, the heir to the throne seems to have been the eldest son of a favourite wife, and not necessarily the eldest of all the sons. The king's daughters also took rank from the amount of favour the mother possessed with the king. During Bosman's absence from Fida at the end of his first visit the king's favourite daughter was given in marriage to an English trader. When Bosman returned, as he considered himself more in favour with the king than any other white man, he asked him, in jest, why he had not kept his daughter till he came back. The king replied quite seriously that he did not know that Bosman wished to marry her, but that it was not too late now, and he could give orders for her to be transferred at once. 'What think you, sir?' asks the gay old Dutchman of the silent recipient of his letters. 'Are not this king's daughters very cheap? But the mischief is, marrying a king's daughter in this country is not very advantageous, otherwise I had not failed long since to be happy that way.'

Bosman must have held a very high place in the king's good will, for he was lodged in a portion of the royal buildings, with a suite of seven rooms at his disposal, a beautiful court with a covered gallery, and three warehouses in which to store his goods. The king was very hospitable, and was continually inviting him to dinner, at which he used to provide him with all that was best to eat and drink. So fond was this sable monarch of the white man's company, that he would frequently have him in his palace all day, entertaining him with his conversation, which was full of a shrewd humour, or playing games of chance, of which he was very fond. The stakes were always in livestock—an ox, goat, or sheep—never goods nor money. 'In these games,' remarks the Dutchman, with a quiet satisfaction, 'I always had this advantage of him, that if I won he immediately sent home my

winnings; but, on the contrary, if I lost, he did not desire to receive my losings.' An arrangement which must have been very agreeable to the thrifty trader.

With regard to the principal offences against the laws of the land and the modes of punishing them, Bosman declares that there were very few capital crimes, only those of murder and adultery with one of the king's or his chief captains' wives. At a date when Europe was still hanging for sheep-stealing, this no doubt seemed a very lenient criminal code. But the actual infliction of the penalty was rare in Fida; the natives, owing to their fear of death, being very careful not to lay themselves open to it. Lighter offences were determined by ordeals of varying character and efficiency. One of these was to throw the accused into a certain river which was credited with the wonderful property of drowning all guilty persons, while the innocent escaped unhurt, supposing they were able to save themselves by swimming. 'But all of them being very expert in this,' remarks the sagacious chronicler, 'I never heard that this river ever yet convicted any person, for they all came well out, paying a certain sum to the king, for which end alone I believe this trial to be designed.'

The religious beliefs of the Fidasians opens a much larger field for inquiry and speculation than their civil institutions. The number of deities possessed by them seems to have been beyond all reckoning. Bosman asked one of the chief natives, who was a very intelligent man, how many gods his people acknowledged. The chief laughed, and said that in truth the white man had puzzled him, for no one in the whole country could give an exact account of them. 'For my part,' he confessed with a ready candour, 'I have a very large number of gods, and doubt not that others have as many.' He explained that when starting on any expedition or undertaking, it was their custom to make a god of the first thing they saw, whether a dumb animal, such as a pig, sheep, or dog, or an inanimate object, like a tree or stone. When they returned at the conclusion of the enterprise, if successful, they would give offerings to this deity; if unsuccessful, they deposited it from the pedestal of their veneration, and thought no more about it.

Apart, however, from the numerous deities created in this manner, there were three classes of gods which received universal homage. They were snakes, trees, and the sea. Of these, snakes were by far the most important, and temples or snake-houses,

were erected to them all over the country, while an order of priests was devoted solely to their service.¹ Every species of snake was not included in this worship, the venomous ones being the exception, contrary to what one would expect from the superstitious cast of unreasoning and primitive intelligence, usually more apt to pay homage to a god that could work harm than to one that had no such power. But there may have been a grain of shrewd common-sense underlying this distinction, which would allow the venomous snakes, as not being sacred, to be destroyed, and thus remove a really dangerous enemy.

In connection with snake-worship, the priests had invented a very fruitful source of extracting tribute from the people. The bite of a sacred snake, although not poisonous, was said to have the effect of making people mad. The victims were always women and mostly young girls. When any one of these showed

¹ The worship of the snake still survives on this portion of the coast. When the writer of this article was engaged on the staff of the telegraph ship *Silvertown*—belonging to the *Silvertown Company*—in laying a cable down this coast in August 1886, on arriving at Cutanu, a small trading settlement belonging to the French, about eighty or ninety miles east of Whydah, the surf was running too high to admit of the line for hauling the cable ashore being landed in boats. Accordingly, we had recourse to the rocket apparatus for the purpose. The natives had assembled in large crowds to watch the operations, and when they saw the flash and heard the loud report and then observed those on shore run down and draw a line out of the water, they raised the cry of 'A snake! A snake!' and fled away in the utmost panic. When the cable was landed, the *Silvertown* proceeded on its journey, laying down as far as St. Paul de Loanda. On returning to Cutanu some two months after on the homeward voyage, the party who put off from the ship saw a hostile group of natives ashore, who, however, retreated when the party landed, muttering threats and menaces against them. A native who was in the employ of the operators at the telegraph hut then explained that during our absence a large landlocked lagoon, one end of which was close by the hut, had burst its banks and emptied a great quantity of its water into the sea, so that inland villages which before lay on its banks were now some three or four miles from the water. As this lagoon was used for a highway for merchandise from the interior, the sudden subsidence caused a great interruption to the traffic, and the priests at once declared that the mishap was due to the influence of the 'hissing snakes' which we had thrown ashore from our ship, and which they denounced as evil fetishes sent to work them harm. Some of them journeyed all the way to Abomey, the capital of Dahomey, to give information to the king, whose dominion reaches down to the coast; and just before we sailed, we received a message from this mighty monarch, saying that if we did not leave his territory at once and take our evil gods with us, he would come down with his army and 'sweep us off the face of the earth.' Needless to say that this terrible threat did not precipitate our movements, and that the operators who were left ashore were never molested by a single native, much less by a hostile force from Dahomey.

symptoms of mental derangement, the priests declared that she had been bitten by a snake, and hurried her off at once to a snake-house, where alone it was said she could be cured, and where her relatives had to pay a large sum for her maintenance till her recovery was announced. It was noticeable that a woman was never bitten when any witness was in sight, a circumstance which went to throw discredit on the power attributed to the snakes, and made it appear that those who went mad did so on the persuasion or under the threats of the priesthood. This suspicion was strengthened by a case which happened when Bosman was in the country. The wife of a leading native, the same who had so boldly foiled the errand of the king's wives—being seized with madness, he took her by the hand, as if to lead her to the snake-house, but passing on the way the dwelling of an English trader, he hurried her into it, and offered her for sale as a slave. Directly she perceived what was going to happen to her, she recovered her senses with marvellous rapidity, and falling down on her knees begged her husband to take her back, assuring him with many protestations that she would never go mad again. This was a bold thing to do, and how much he risked by the action can be seen from what happened to a Gold Coast negro who had lately come to Fida. When one of this man's wives went mad, being ignorant of the religious customs of the country, he clapped her into irons instead of sending her to the snake-house. The priests soon heard of it, and without taking any public revenge, they had him secretly poisoned by a drug which brought on death by creeping paralysis. 'From which you may observe,' is the conclusion the Dutch trader draws for the benefit of his friend, 'that throughout the world it is very dangerous to disoblige the ecclesiastics.'

So great was the influence of the priesthood, that the king, although regarded by his subjects almost as a deity, was himself a victim of their extortions. At one time he used to make a yearly progress to the chief snake-house to pay homage to the presiding deity. But the demands of the priests for offerings to the snake on these occasions became so exorbitant, that the king discontinued his personal visits, and found he could do it more cheaply by sending round a batch of his wives instead. That was not, however, the only opportunity which the priests enjoyed of levying contributions from the head of the state. The snakes were supposed to have the power of sending rich or poor crops, according as they wished, and for the purpose of insuring their

goodwill, a large annual tribute was collected. One year the king, who had already given a handsome offering without his crops looking any the better for it, sent to ask the priests what was the reason of the failure. They replied that the deity required a further donation. This was too great a demand on his majesty's forbearance, and he declared in a rage that he would give nothing more that year; 'and if the snake won't bestow a plentiful harvest,' he said, 'he can let it alone, for,' with a glance at the practical side of the question, 'the greater part of my corn is rotten already.' In any case, this unwilling tribute seems to have had very little influence with the deities, and Bosman gives it as his opinion that 'these roguish priests sweep all the offerings to themselves and doubtless make very merry with them.'

The veneration in which the snakes were held was the cause of considerable inconvenience to European residents in the country. The reptiles used to find their way into every corner of the house, even into the beds, and it was as much as a white man's life was worth to attempt to eject them forcibly. The only way to manage it was to induce a native to undertake the removal. After a great deal of hesitation, he would approach the deity with a stick, and inserting it into the centre of his coil would carry him out with all possible care and tenderness.

If, however, the snake was coiled round a bed-post, or the leg of a table, nothing would induce a native to attempt to remove it. In Bosman's house a snake once coiled himself on a rafter immediately above the dinner-table. He seemed to like his lodging, for day after day found him in the same position. When he had been there a fortnight, Bosman happened to be giving a dinner party to some chiefs, and during the dessert he drew their attention to the snake, and remarked that he must be getting rather hungry, as he had not eaten anything for fourteen days. His guests smiled, and in the fulness of their faith replied that he need have no misgivings on the deity's behalf, for he would not starve, but well knew how to provide himself from the stock of provisions in the house. The following day Bosman, in an audience with the king, informed him that he had been entertaining a sacred snake for the last fortnight, and hinted that his keep was becoming rather a heavy item in the household expenses. On hearing this, the king said that he could not think of allowing a foreigner to be at the charge of maintaining one of the country's gods, and that he would at once send round an ox for the snake to go on with; adding, that he would continue to supply the

deity with food as long as he thought proper to remain beneath the white man's roof. This offer was very acceptable to Bosman, who declares that at the same rate he would willingly have boarded all the gods in the land, and not have lost much by the bargain.

If a house was burnt down and it transpired that a snake had perished in the flames, a great commotion ensued. Each man, as he received the news, shut his ears, as if it was something too awful to be told, and ran off as quick as he could to the nearest snake-house with an offering of money to appease the relatives of the luckless deity. This susceptibility for the welfare of their gods would not suffer them to listen to a word said in abuse or contempt of them, a disposition which Bosman did not fail to make use of; for, whenever he was pestered in his own quarters by an importunate trader, or bored by a tedious old gossip, he had merely to speak ill of a snake, and his tormentor would clap his hands to his ears, and rush headlong out of the house.

Deference to the snake was exacted not only from men but from dumb animals. Within Bosman's own experience, a snake which had just killed a rat—their principal article of diet—was about to eat it, when a hog came up and took the dainty morsel from him. On the snake expostulating, the hog, who had by this time swallowed the rat, seized the snake, and proceeded to send him the same way as the rat. Unfortunately for the hog, as the snake's tail was disappearing down his throat, it was seen by some natives and recognised as belonging to one of the sacred species. The horror-stricken witnesses of this desecration were paralysed with fear, but at length summoned up sufficient courage to go and report the appalling sacrilege to the king. The king, no doubt urged on by the priests, forthwith issued an edict to the effect that not only the offending hog but all his innocent brethren throughout the kingdom should be put to death. It was a wonderful sight, says Bosman, to see the natives hurrying from their huts sword in hand and slaughtering the harmless animals in all directions, as though they had been a hostile army who had suddenly surprised and seized their camp.

The trees, which formed the second class of gods, received but a very scant and irregular homage, and had no order of priests attached to their service. The third object of reverence was the sea, which was only appealed to when in a violent mood, as it then interfered with the unloading of the ships. On these occasions the natives brought down to the beach all kinds of property, both

food and clothing, and cast them into the waters. This manner of sacrificing, however, the priests did not much encourage, as all of it went to the deity and none to themselves.

During Bosman's last visit to Fida, an Augustine monk arrived from St. Thomé with the view of persuading the natives to give up the worship of snakes and embrace the doctrines of Christianity. But from the very outset he was met with an insuperable difficulty, the universal practice of polygamy. In a country where the wives of the common people were counted by tens, those of the captains by hundreds, and the king's by thousands, there was little chance of inducing them to be content with only one. The king, indeed, was courteous to the priest, and even consented on one occasion to hear mass. After he had attended it, Bosman asked him what he thought of it, to which he replied, 'It was well enough, but I prefer to keep to my own Fetish for all that.' The priest, however, persisted in his endeavours, and one day, finding that a long exhortation to the king and his captains had produced no effect, he lost his self-control, denounced them in unmeasured terms, and told them that if they continued in their life of sin without repentance, they would surely go to hell. This caused a temporary silence in the assembly, till an aged captain, who was usually the mouthpiece of the court, replied that he was sorry to think that such was the fate in store for them, but that as their fathers and forefathers had lived in the same manner as they did, they would at least have the satisfaction of their company in that place of torment.

Reference has already been made to the excessive fear of death among the Fidasians. With this failing it can be imagined that they did not make very good warriors, and that, although with their teeming population they could put two hundred thousand men in the field, they were so weak and heartless that they would not encounter as many as five thousand of any warlike tribe. It was in accordance with this prevailing weakness that, during a war, their captains should stay at home in safety, while the command of the army was given to one of the common herd. Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that the general, 'if he was but moderately nimble,' as Bosman puts it, used to get home before his men, being at least as fond of life as they; and the only word the Dutchman has to say in favour of their courage, is that they showed a little more fortitude in defending their own country than in attacking another, thereby confirming the truth of the old proverb that 'every dog will bark in his own kennel.'

MOUNTAIN STUMPS.

THE fine old crusted American traveller (now, unhappily, becoming extinct before the spread of Culture) used often in the good old days, when he pervaded Europe in six weeks, surveying it from end to end, as per Appleton's 'Guide,' with cheerful promptitude, to astonish one's ears from time to time by his complacent numerical estimate of natural beauties. He carried in his mental pocket an imaginary footrule, by whose aid he meted and compared all European greatness, either physical or spiritual. 'This cataract,' he used to say, with statistical exactness, as he posed himself, supercilious, before the Swallow Fall, or the Linn o' Dee, 'is fifteen feet high by seventeen wide, and runs at the rate of four hundred cubic feet per minute; whereas the Falls of Niagara are sixty feet by half a mile,' or whatever else the particular amount might be, 'and they precipitate each moment a body of water equal to fourteen times the volume of the Thames at London Bridge and at high tide, mean measurement.' From which stupendous facts, poured forth irresistibly, the inferior British intelligence was supposed to draw an immediate inference that the Swallow Fall was scarcely worth looking at, and that Niagara could whip the Linn o' Dee into a cocked hat, if it only seriously made its gigantic mind up to post the stakes for an international contest.

The March of Intellect, however, or else the Zeit-geist, or some other *Deus ex machina* of the epoch, has now perhaps persuaded almost all Americans, except Mr. Andrew Carnegie, that you can't measure scenery by the cubic foot. The leaven of Boston has begun to leaven the whole mass. Florence is not as big a town, it is true, as New York; but even New Yorkers will cheerfully admit at the present day that the Bargello has points not to be observed in the City Hall; that the Pitti Palace contains certain objects not precisely to be equalled in the Metropolitan Museum; and that Giotto's campanile may claim more consideration from the candid tourist than the tower of Trinity Church in Broadway. The trade of Venice is undoubtedly inferior to the trade of Philadelphia; but the Piazza of St. Mark's has attractions scarcely to be met with in any part of Chestnut Street. The

Mississippi is a much bigger river than the Rhine ; but it doesn't take its rise in the heart of Switzerland, or roll its glacier-fed stream past the crags of the Drachenfels. And so forth *ad infinitum*.

It is just the same with mountains. Their essential mountainhood can no more be measured by height above sea level alone, than Salisbury or Lincoln can be measured against the Capitol at Washington by that simple footrule which Mr. Carnegie wields with relentless hand, as the surest means of comparing Texas with the United Kingdom. The intelligent traveller must have observed for himself, indeed, in almost every country of the world to which his native instinct and Mr. Cook's coupons have led his wandering steps, how many undoubted mountains there are which hardly rise above a few hundred feet. On the other hand, he must have noticed long chains of hills or downs which reach in places a highly respectable altitude without ever in the remotest degree suggesting any claim to the mountainous character. Dear old Gilbert White of Selborne (one is always expected to refer to Gilbert White in terms of somewhat supercilious but demonstrative affection) alludes in one of his exquisitely naïve letters to the Sussex South Downs as 'that magnificent range of mountains.' To anybody who knows what a mountain means, the phrase, as applied to Cissbury Hill or the Devil's Dyke, seems little short of grotesque. The Downs have, no doubt, a singular charm and beauty of their own ; no Englishman could ever wish the shadows on their hollow combes to grow less : but theirs is distinctly the beauty of gentle undulating hill country, the idyllic beauty of tender turf and smooth native lawn—as different as possible from anything which the phrase 'a magnificent range of mountains' calls up before the mind's eye of an Alpine climber or a Cook's tourist of the nobler sort.

It would be hard to find anywhere a better example of the short and stumpy mountain here contemplated than the tors of Dartmoor. There you get in full perfection all the mountain characteristics in a square block of country which hardly rises higher than many upland tracts of Central France or Germany. What is it that makes Dartmoor so distinctly mountainous, while Leith Hill is merely a broad sandstone slope, and St. Boniface Down at Ventnor nothing better than a huge boss of overgrown sheepwalk ?

The answer is, because, geologically speaking, Dartmoor is the

last relic of an old prehistoric mountain range. It is what it looks—the worn stump or basal wreck of a huge and ancient Alpine system.

Nor is that all. These remnants of mountains which we find scattered about over the face of the globe everywhere are full of interest from the incidental light they cast upon the history and vicissitudes of continents. We are accustomed to talk about the eternal hills: but these ruins show us how the eternal hills themselves wear out in time as surely as the knees of our boys' knickerbockers. We think of the Alps and the Himalayas as very ancient piles; and so they are, compared with the Pyramids or the Eiffel Tower: but these older ranges force us to acknowledge in turn that in many cases to be 'as old as the hills' is to be a great deal older than the highest mountains. In fact, we shall see, when we investigate them in detail, that the greatest existing chains are for the most part of very recent date—mere modern upstarts—while the oldest and most venerable mountains on earth are generally worn away to mere stumps or tail-pieces.

The ancient volcano of Mull in the Hebrides is a splendid typical, middle-aged example of these worn-down peaks; or, rather, though comparatively young, it exhibits well the phenomena of premature decrepitude. In its present state, the Mull volcano very remotely indeed resembles Etna or Vesuvius: it is only by an act of reconstructive imagination that the tourist who visits it by the Clyde steamer from Glasgow can see it once more raising its snow-capped cone high into prehistoric clouds, and pouring forth floods of liquid lava over the astonished plains of Tertiary Scotland. But if his imagination has undergone the proper scientific education (this kind of thing takes a deal of training) he will be able to perform that difficult feat of second sight (as Sir Charles Russell would say) without a moment's hesitancy. The whole island of Mull, in fact, is nothing more than the mere weatherbeaten base of some vast prehistoric Teneriffe or Stromboli, which once towered into the air with its volcanic cone as high as Etna, and smoked away from its angry crater as vigorously as Chimborazo itself.

At the present day this ruined volcano of Mull is seen, as it were, sliced across its base, so as to lay bare the very centre and ground-plan of the mountain. Geologists find this a great convenience, as sections of active volcanoes at the present day would be both difficult and expensive to obtain. Judging by the breadth

across the foundations now exposed, the peak in its best days must have had a diameter of nearly thirty miles; and by the analogy of its modern sisters elsewhere, we may conclude that in its palmiest and most vigorous period its cone rose some ten or twelve thousand feet above sea level. We can still make out in the rocks of the district the dim story of the various stages by which the great mountain was gradually built up, and still more gradually rubbed down and worn away again. The outer circle of the island consists almost entirely of antique lava currents, now hardened into basalt, or of volcanic tuffs and showers of pebbles. The centre is composed of the once active vents and craters themselves, filled up at present with molten masses of gabbros and dolerite. We can even trace various ages of the lava, some of the streams having flowed from earlier and others from later craters; and the eruptions vary in the character of their composition as modern lavas vary at different periods.

Now the volcano of Mull, though ancient enough as men reckon age in their own history, was, comparatively speaking, quite a recent mountain—a thing of yesterday as we compute time in geology, perhaps little more than a couple of million years old or thereabouts. It was in full blast during either the Miocene or the Eocene age, which I will not insult the intelligence of the present generation by further describing as the early Tertiary period. Even our women nowadays learn geology at High Schools and give points to Macaulay's schoolboy. I may mention, however, that we know this date owing to a very curious accident; for, as a rule, the age of volcanoes is as difficult to determine as that of unmarried ladies, owing to their ashes and lavas naturally enclosing nothing in the way of fossils to guide us to their origin. We can say, of course, that the mountains are later than the beds which they disturb and alter by their intrusion; but how much later has to be left, as a rule, to pure guesswork. In the case of the Mull volcano, however, the lavas have been kind enough to preserve for us a distinct clue somewhat of the same sort as that preserved by the Roman remains at Herculaneum and Pompeii. Between the different layers of basalt which mark the various successive lava-streams there occur in places thin beds of clay, on which fossil impressions of leaves are found in considerable numbers. These clays represent the quiescent periods between one eruption and the next, and the leaves embedded in them are those of the trees that grew upon the slopes of the mountain in

its lucid intervals. They are interesting on many accounts, both because they bear witness to the very mild and almost sub-tropical condition which then prevailed over the whole of Scotland and England, and because they enable us with tolerable certainty to fix the approximate geological date of the days when the volcano was still in full activity. Fossils, indeed, are the true landmarks of geological chronology.

Caledonia in those days, to judge from these remains, far from being stern and wild, enjoyed what its modern hardy natives would probably describe as a 'soft' climate. Huge conifers, like the 'big trees' of California, and belonging to an almost indistinguishable species, then covered the slopes of Mr. William Black's beloved Highlands. Beside them grew ancestral pines and yews, with the parent forms of the plane, the alder, the buck-thorn, and the laurustinus. All these plants, with the contemporary cinnamons, figs, and evergreen oaks, bear close likenesses to the modern Mexican types, and show a climate at least as warm as that of Georgia or South Carolina. As to age, the trees belong either to the Eocene or else to the Miocene period (experts, of course, are at daggers drawn over the precise era to which they should be assigned), when scarcely a single quadruped now living on earth had begun to assume its familiar shape. They go back to the days when strange tapirs and crocodiles haunted the flooded banks of some mightier Thames, and when the gigantic deinothorium and the unshapely mastodon shook with their heavy tread the higher hills of Gloucestershire.

Still, geologically speaking, the volcano of Mull is quite a recent and almost historical mountain. How, then, has it come to be reduced so soon, as by some heroic course of Banting, to such small dimensions? Well, the answer doubtless is, because it was a volcano. Had it been a good, solid, rocky mountain, the same through and through, like Somebody-or-other's tea, or like Mont Blanc and Mount Washington, it would doubtless have resisted the wear and tear of ages far more energetically. But what can you expect from a mere frothy volcano? Its cone is mostly built up of loose and spongy materials—ash and lapilli, and scoriac refuse-heaps—which make a great show for the money in the matter of height, but possess very little stability or fixity of tenure. As long as the crater goes on replacing the loss from wear and tear by constant eruptions, the cone continues to present a most imposing appearance to the outer eye; but as soon

as the internal energies cool down, and the mountain sinks into the dormant or extinct condition, rain and storm begin at once to disintegrate the loosely piled mass, and to rub down the great ash-heap into a thousand valleys.

Denudation, indeed, as geologists call it, though slow and silent, is a far more potent destructive force in nature than the noisy, spasmodic earthquakes or eruptions to which ordinary humanity, scared by their bluster, attaches so much undue importance. Wind and rain are mightier than fire. The 'devouring element' is really water. On the High Rocks at Tunbridge Wells some eighteenth-century poetaster has hung a board inscribed with verses moralising on the 'prodigious power' that could rend asunder the living rock. Your modern geologist raises his eyes, and sees with a smile the 'prodigious power' hard at work there before his very face—a tiny, trickling dribble of water, that oozes through the soft sandstone amid moss and liverwort, and slowly carries away, by a grain at a time, or rather by imperceptible atoms in solution, the seemingly coherent mass over which it dribbles. It is the same prodigious power, asserted over some ten thousand or so of our petty centuries, that has worn down the volcano of Mull to its lowest base, and laid bare the very sources and entrails of the great mountain.

Rain, snow, and ice, however, or even the moving glaciers of the terrible Glacial Epoch, have not planed down Mull as yet to an even or level surface. The unequal hardness of the various rocks causes them to resist in very unequal degrees; so that the close crystalline materials filling the central vent, as Mr. Judd (our recognised authority on the habits and manners of volcanoes) justly remarks, stand up in the middle as big hilly groups; while the softer materials around have been largely worn away into corries and hollows. In places, the gradual removal by water-agencies of the ash and tuff has left the large dykes (or masses of igneous rock formed in the fissures of the mountain by the outwelling of fiery materials from below) standing out like gigantic walls; and it is this that gives rise to those curious black inland cliffs, so characteristic of the scenery of Mull. On the other hand, the remnants of the lava-streams, hard and equal in texture, remain for the most part as isolated plateaux. The hills still left behind in the hard crystalline core have even now a height of three thousand feet: but this is a mere fraction of the ten or twelve thousand which the central cone must almost cer-

tainly have attained in the days when it rose majestic to the sky, crowned with wreathing smoke above, and clad below by a dark waving forest of colossal Wellingtonias.

Another one of these 'dissected volcanoes,' as they have been aptly termed, occupies (without prejudice to the claims of the crofters) the entire area of the Isle of Skye. This decrepit mountain has indeed seen better days. When it was young and lusty, in those same fiery, frolicsome Tertiary times, it must have risen as high as Monte Rosa or Mont Blanc, and smoked like ten thousand German professors. To-day nothing remains of all that vast pile, says Mr. Judd, but the crystalline granite that fills up the huge fissures through which the eruption of molten materials once took place. It is these harder portions, sculptured into fantastic shapes by wind or weather, and carved out into domelike masses or wild rugged peaks, that constitute the Red Mountains and Cuchullin Hills of Skye, and now rise some 3,000 feet above sea level. The ignorant Southron who doesn't know the district and its Gaelic tongue may be warned parenthetically that Cuchullin is pronounced Coolin, according to the usual playful orthographic fancy of the Celtic intelligence, which always gives you good weight of extra consonants for your money; but if you can throw a little graceful guttural energy into the middle of the word it will be much appreciated by the friendly gilly. From the central masses of crystalline rock hard dykes radiate everywhere through the surrounding country, while isolated patches of scorice and pebbles ejected by the old crater have every here and there, under favourable conditions, escaped removal. The outskirts or fringes of the great mountain mass consist of flat-topped hills, the last undenuded relics of the outlying lava-streams.

In both these cases, owing to their comparatively recent date, it is still quite possible for the reconstructive geologist to trace in detail the history of the mountain, and to observe how large a portion even of the mere circumference has escaped destruction. Older ranges have suffered far more severely. The rain and wind have pounded and pummelled them for far longer periods, and to better effect. They stand to Mull and Skye as Stonehenge or Abury stand to Tintern or Bolton Abbey. Of this intermediate stage, that worn and flattened stump, Dartmoor, is an excellent example. It is older far than the Scotch volcanoes: the wide block of the moor consists entirely of granite, which

was pushed up by internal forces early in the Secondary period of geology, and has altered in character the coal-bearing rocks through which it has burst with eruptive energy. A great many curious little side-indications enable us to trace the history of Dartmoor with moderate certainty through a vastly longer period than either of the big extinct Scotch mountains.

In its earliest state, Dartmoor too was a volcanic range; and Brent Tor seems to occupy the site of its ancient crater. Ashes and cinders in small quantities still survive the wreck of so many ages, and mark out approximately the site of the cone so long removed by centuries of denudation. When the red sandstone cliffs of Devonshire were laid down beneath the Triassic sea, however, Dartmoor had already begun to be the prey of storm, rain, and torrent; for boulders of granite derived from its sides, and rolled down by rivers, are found in the pudding-stones and breccias of that remote age—the hardened masses of sea-beach and pebble which occur so abundantly around Budleigh Salterton and other villages of the coast. Later on, when the blue lias of Lyme Regis and the oolite of the Bath and Oxford hills were slowly accumulating in some antique Mediterranean, the site of England was mainly occupied by a warm basking sea, as Professor Ramsay has shown, surrounding an archipelago of which Dartmoor, Wales, and Cumberland formed the principal islands. In that age, too, fragments of Dartmoor got incorporated here and there in the surrounding sediment. During the long interval while the greensand and chalk were gathering in thick layers on the ocean floor, we get hardly a glimpse of the condition of the Devonian highlands; but in the Tertiary days, when Mull and Skye were in full blast, the little extinct lake of Bovey Tracey once more lets us get a passing hint of what was taking place among the granite shoulders of the antique volcano. For the entire basin of that small Miocene tarn is now filled up with some 300 feet thick of white clay sediment, the waste of the granite crags of Dartmoor. It is of that clay, ready ground by ages of water-action, that the Bovey potters make their well-known stoneware. Among the beds which supply it we still find leaves and other remains of plants essentially similar to those preserved for us beneath the Scotch lavas and basalts; Wellingtonias, cinnamons, liquidambars, and fig-trees, with climbing rotang-palms, and sub-tropical lianas.

Now, it is quite clear that a mountain range, exposed for so many ages to the wear and tear of rain and torrent, can't be as

high to-day as when it was first pushed up to the summer skies of a Permian Britain. If Mull has had time to get worn down to three thousand feet, surely Dartmoor may be forgiven for only just exceeding its bare two thousand. It is highly creditable to the original hardness of its rock that anything at all of it should be left after so vigorous a bombardment of rain and river. Indeed, there are great beds of sand and clay as far off as Poole, in Dorsetshire, which were almost certainly derived from the waste of Dartmoor. Now, any fellow can see at a glance that you can't remove whole square miles of detritus from a mountain range, and yet leave it as high as it was in the beginning. Dartmoor, to begin with, must have been a very massive mountain indeed, or there wouldn't be so much of it left after such continual planing. Hard as is the material of which it is composed, it could scarcely have outlived its long battering by rain and stream had it not risen at the outset to a conspicuous height above the surrounding level. At the present day the moor is worn down to an almost even tableland, from which here and there the very hardest portions rise as *tors* or *clatters* with their weather-beaten boulders above the general plateau. The tors themselves, in fact, consist of the very solid central nodules which have longest resisted the action of water, and they are sometimes perched on the top of the hills as logans or rocking-stones, like the well-known Nutcracker at Lustleigh Cleave. Dartmoor, in fact, gives us an excellent example of an antique mountain now in the second stage of degradation, still preserving its mountain character in its rocks and valleys, but flattened out on top by continuous wear and tear into an undulating tableland.

Far older and far more reduced to a mere stump or relic is that ancient range in Charnwood Forest, in Leicestershire, of which the low granite boss of Mount Sorrel is the most conspicuous modern survival. Here, indeed, we get a mountain in its last feeble state of dotage, sans peak, sans tor, sans glen, sans everything. Charnwood Forest, according to recent geologists, is probably the very oldest piece of land in all England; for it belongs to that very antique formation known as the Archæan, which dates back earlier than the time of any fossiliferous rocks whatsoever. No remains of living beings have ever been found in these very ancient grits, slates, and agglomerates; they seem to antedate the appearance of life upon our globe, at least in any

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Far older and far more reduced to a mere stump or relic is that ancient range in Charnwood Forest, in Leicestershire, of which the low granite boss of Mount Sorrel is the most conspicuous modern survival. Here, indeed, we get a mountain in its last feeble state of dotage, sans peak, sans tor, sans glen, sans everything. Charnwood Forest, according to recent geologists, is probably the very oldest piece of land in all England; for it belongs to that very antique formation known as the Archæan, which dates back earlier than the time of any fossiliferous rocks whatsoever. No remains of living beings have ever been found in these very ancient grits, slates, and agglomerates; they seem to antedate the appearance of life upon our globe, at least in any

form capable of being preserved to us as a fossil petrification. (Scientific readers are earnestly requested not to reopen the old and interminable Eozoon controversy. Spare the grey hairs of an unoffending citizen from postcard discussions of that insufferable nuisance.) The Charnwood Forest hills are 'the much-weathered and denuded mountain-peaks of an old pre-Cambrian land,' says Professor Prestwich, 'swamped and nearly hidden by the newer sedimentary strata which encircle it and fill up the depressions between each protruding ridge. It is a good example of the way in which the features of the early land-surfaces have been obliterated by later changes.' That is the cold and unfeeling way in which men of science talk about the backbone of their fatherland!

How strange it is to think that these little hills, rising to some seven or eight hundred feet only, and scarcely known even to the intelligent schoolboy who has passed the sixth standard away from their immediate neighbourhood, are yet immeasurably older than the Alps or the Himalayas, and had been already dry land for countless centuries, while the Pyrenees and the Rocky Mountains slumbered beneath the beds of primæval oceans! Yet even now, unable to keep a secret, they betray to close observers their volcanic origin. Bardon Hill consists entirely of solidified ash; Markfield is built upon a round boss of eruptive syenite; and Mount Sorrel itself stands out from the soft strata around as a worn kernel of hard pink granite. On every side of them the new red sandstone fills up the hollows between their ancient peaks, now worn as flat as an old Indian's teeth; but the remnants of the ancient hills still peep out here and there through the newer sediments, retaining sufficiently their primitive character even now to have gained for the most isolated and abrupt among them the significant name of Mount Sorrel, almost unique in England. Beyond this point it is well-nigh impossible for any mountain to degenerate, unless, indeed, it gets worn quite flat, and merges indistinguishably into the level of the surrounding plain.

And this is pretty much what has happened in places to the very oldest and most venerable mountain chain of all—the Laurentian range of Canada and the Great Lake Basin. At one time, there can be little doubt, this colossal system of ancient peaks, running right across the western continent from Nova Scotia and Labrador to the Missouri River, must have equalled in magni-

tude the Himalayas, the Andes, or the Rocky Mountains. It forms the first rough sketch and axis of America. But as it belongs to a period even earlier than the Primary rocks of ordinary British geology—a period inconceivably and incalculably remote—it has been exposed for countless centuries to the wearing effect of rain, frost, snow, and rivers. In many places, therefore, the Laurentian range is reduced to a mere low plain of very solid gneiss, much scratched in strange hieroglyphics by the vast glaciers of the Great Ice Age, and sometimes even hollowed out into beds of lakes, or traversed by the basins of existing streams. Many parts of it, occupied by great sheets of water, actually fall below sea level. Yet even to this day, in its dishonoured age, the Laurentian country, however flat, preserves certain vague mountain characteristics in the bareness of its rocks, the picturesque detail of its sparse pine-clad slopes, and the number and beauty of its wild torrent cataracts. You feel instinctively you are in a mountain country, though you stand in the midst of a great unvaried plain. The Laurentian region is like Scotland pressed flat, or like the Dolomites or Auvergne with the wrinkles ironed out of them. It has nothing in common with the great plains which have always been plains and nothing more—alluvial silt of river deltas—like Holland, Lombardy, or the flat centre of Russia.

As the oldest mountains are thus the most worn out, so, conversely, the highest chains are those of most geologically recent origin—the *nouveaux riches*, as it were, amongst the orographical aristocracy. From time to time the earth makes itself a new coat; but before long, as with other garments, the nap gets worn off, the elbows crack, and the seams become threadbare. All the higher ranges now known on earth are demonstrably not earlier in origin than the Tertiary times. Compared with venerable pensioners like Mount Sorrel or the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence Basin, the Alps and the Andes are but things of yesterday. Auvergne may well look down upon the Pyrenees. The tops of some of the highest Swiss mountains consist of Miocene rocks; in other words, as late as the Miocene period, the year-before-last of the geological chronologist, the area occupied by the rearing crags of the Jungfrau and the Matterhorn slumbered at peace beneath a deep sea, and received there the muddy or sandy deposits which now figure as rocks on the jagged Alpine summits. The upheaval of the Alpine axis was a very recent event; and most of the

material which forms the snowy ranges was laid down on the ocean bed ages and ages after Dartmoor formed an island like Jamaica in the midst of a basking oolitic ocean.

Why is this? Simply because, in the nature of things, as soon as mountains have reached their highest point and ceased to grow—as soon as the movement of upheaval comes to an end—they must necessarily begin to grow down again rapidly, and to undergo disintegration on every side. There is no such thing, the moralists tell us, as standing still; either you are going up or else you are coming down again. So energetic is the work of denudation in the higher regions of the air, says Professor Judd (regarding the matter rather from the cool, scientific standpoint), that the elevated crags and pinnacles are being constantly broken up by moisture and frost at an exceedingly rapid rate. Glaciers and mountain torrents carry down heaps of boulders, mud, and moraine stuff with ceaseless activity to the valleys below. The rocks crumble away into sand or fine powder, and are washed slowly apart into those rude, angular masses that often strew the slopes and ledges. Landslips and avalanches help in the destructive work; even the sun's heat, the wind, and the roots of plants, all play their part in the constant warfare against the stability of the mountain. Now and then, whole shoulders fall off at once, as at the Rossberg, and later at Naini Tal, but oftener the work proceeds by constant instalments. Where such a high rate of disintegration as this is long maintained, it would be impossible for any mountain chain to exist unimpaired through the immense epochs of geological ages. Accordingly, all the great ranges of the earth at the present day are at the very furthest of Tertiary origin; and wherever we find systems of earlier date still surviving in our midst as hills or ridges, they are always worn down by continuous water action to the condition of the merest stumps or basal relics. In the course of a few million years or so more, the industrious Swiss farmer of the United States of Europe will be driving his electric plough over the low plain of the Mönch and Eiger, or sailing his automatic skiff above the site of Pilatus; while the Leslie Stephens and the Douglas Freshfields (if any) of those remote periods will be gaining deathless glory on the roll of fame by scaling the virgin heights of the Newfoundland banks, or falling headlong over the precipitous cliffs of the vast crags that will rear themselves sheer over the basin of the Baltic.

FRENCH-ENGLISH.

VOLTAIRE was fond of asserting that he was the first Frenchman who made England and English literature known to France. Unless one insists on absolutely literal accuracy—and when an author is speaking of his own merits it is vain to expect this—Voltaire's boast may very well be allowed to pass. The famous Frenchman had spent nearly three years of the prime of his life in England; he had formed friendships with all the prominent Englishmen of the day, Bolingbroke, Pope, and Swift among them; he had studied the English language and English literature with indefatigable attention; he had actually published in London a still not uninteresting little book written in the English language; and in a series of brightly-composed letters he had revealed to his own fellow-countrymen the new English world which he had thus discovered for himself. An extraordinary number of the most distinguished Frenchmen of the eighteenth century followed Voltaire in visiting England, and as one of the smaller results of this closer intimacy between the two countries a very considerable number of English words began to find their way into the French vocabulary. This number was very largely increased after the battle of Waterloo, when French aristocrats and other *émigrés* who had passed their years of exile in England returned to France, and took back English words with them. The introduction into France of something which had at least the show of constitutional government made a further opening for such English words as bill, budget, speech, pamphlet, meeting, jury, verdict. The English railway movement contributed to the French language the words coke, rail, wagon, tender, ballast, express, tunnel. Sport, too, supplied a very considerable number. Sometimes the English origin of the word was very thinly concealed by a slight disguise, so that we are all familiar with 'boule-dogue' for bulldog, 'redingote' for riding-coat, and 'boulingrin' for bowling-green. French writers of the present day carry this process very far indeed. One can hardly take up a modern French novel without lighting on such words as 'spleenétique,' 'flairtage,' 'lynchage,' 'snobisme,' 'blackboulage,' 'clownique;' while the number of such infinitives as 'shopper,' 'yachter,' 'toaster,'

'interviewer' is simply endless. But the way in which the modern French writer rushes into a bold and profuse employment of English words without any French disguise at all—and, of course, usually in a ludicrously incorrect way—is really not very far removed from a mild form of literary mania.

'Inglis is spike hier.' So runs, or used to run, in some hostelry in the Pas de Calais, a friendly greeting intended for the delight and information of the wandering Englishman. Really, on the title-page of nine out of ten of French novels of the day the author should give his English readers a similarly honest warning by telling them that 'Inglis is write hier.' Let us see the 'Inglis' as the Frenchman writes it for us.

He is generally very great indeed in all matters connected with sport. Among the commonest of all common words in French books nowadays are 'sport,' 'jockey,' 'groom;' and we are all familiar with 'le boxe,' if 'sportique' and 'turfistes' are not of quite such frequent occurrence. The French novelist knows all about the doings of the English 'sportman' and 'sportwoman,' and when the English national game comes in his way he can tell you that among 'le crickets' the two most important characters are the 'batman' and the 'bowlman.' He is charmed when he contemplates a young 'mees,' a young English 'sportwoman,' playing at 'lawn-tenni,' or, as he sometimes phrases it, 'un lawn-tennis.' To the Englishman, on the other hand, what can be more delightful than to behold a whole company of cheerful Frenchmen and Frenchwomen abandoning themselves to the irresistible fascinations of a 'rallye-paper'? M. Georges Ohnet, he of the *Maître de Forges* and of the numberless editions, revels in 'rallye-papers.' Hardened garrison-officers, equestrian ladies, dukes on their mail-coaches, young men in their 'bogheys,' and the inevitable huntsman with his horn and hunting-knife and 'knickerbokers'—'knicker-boots' they sometimes are—follow up this sport with intense enthusiasm, and celebrate its conclusion by a 'gigantesque lunch.' The 'rallye-paper' is the French version of the sport dear to English schoolboys as a paper-chase! French readers refuse to be wearied with descriptions of the noble game, till in the current French novel the 'rallye-paper' is as great a nuisance as in the average English novel is the mad bull—which, if you only knew, is really an exceedingly tame and gentle animal, full of nothing but a pleasant playfulness—from which it is always the hero's duty to rescue the heroine.

In a story which very lately appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* one of the characters is a Scotch baronet who invites some French friends to his moors to shoot 'grouses.' In another we are informed that a French gentleman proposed to organise 'des steeple' in the neighbourhood of his country-house. 'Steeple' is of course the French-English for 'steeple-chases.' Doubtless the races in all these 'steeple' were won by what another well-known French novelist, M. Henry Rabusson, oddly enough calls '*hacks de pur sang*.' A thoroughbred hack!

With English sport on water the Frenchman is equally familiar. He knows all about the English 'rowigmen'; all about the English 'milord's' yacht with its comfortable 'births' and its crew of eight or ten vigorous 'jacks tar'—descendants of the men who in the old days manned our 'woodens bulwarks'; all about our 'cruising,' the 'squifs' in which we row and the 'warfs' at which we land. The French writer who knows England so well as the man of letters who chooses to call himself M. Philippe Daryl actually speaks about 'the crew which gained the prize at the great regatta between Oxford and Cambridge.' Surely M. Daryl might know that all this is what his French compatriots indifferently call 'humbog' or 'humbugh.'

Let us pass from the world of sport, and observe the French writer's performances when the English world of letters is his theme. We read of such authors as Dean 'Swift' and Charles 'Kinsley,' such characters as 'Peckniff,' such English literary masterpieces as the 'Vicaire of Wackefield' and the 'Bidge of Sighs.' It is delightful to hear our Frenchman talking complacently of Mr. William Morris's poem, 'The Earthen Paradise.' Of course he can speak fluently of Darwin and the 'struggle for life.' M. Daudet, in his latest novel, *L'Immortel*, has wonderfully good times with this famous phrase. Ambitious men, anxious to push their way to the front in the world, are by M. Daudet denominated 'strugforlifeurs.' After this it seems tame to be reminded by another French novelist that among the 'go head' people of the United States, where the women are in large excess of the men, the 'strugforlife' assumes the form of a 'struggle for wedding.' (In the Mormon State, to be sure, this struggle is in abeyance, for here we are in the region of 'spiritual's husband' and 'spiritual's wives.') Returning to literature, it is refreshing to learn that Sir Walter Scott wrote a novel entitled 'The Hearth of Midlotian.' A no less personage than a French count, who in 1887 published

a volume under the style of *L'Écosse jadis et aujourd'hui*, has a chapter on Scott in which, among other oddities, we read of 'Dande Dinmont' and find the following pleasant quotations:—

And far beneath
Old Melros' rose, and fair Tweed ran:
Like some tall rock with lichens gray
Seen'd dimly nuge, the dark abbey.

The corbells were cared grotesque and grim;
And the pillars, with cluster'd shafts to trim,
With base and with capital flourish's around.

The same enthusiast is also on familiar terms with the Ettrick Shepherd. Can he not quote from Hogg?

The noble clan Stuart, the bravest of ale.

The native country of Scott and Hogg, the land of 'Salisbury Craigs,' the 'Tolboath' Prison, and the 'Banatym' Club, the country whose native 'Hi-ghlanders' wear the 'kelt' and eat 'very yood herreng,' fares badly at the hands of the distinguished Madame Adam. Skobelev once spent an evening with the two famous war correspondents, Forbes and MacGahan, singing songs for their amusement in French, German, Russian, and Italian. Remembering the nationality of one of his guests, he concluded with something Scotch, and this, as Madame Adam tells us in her pamphlet on Skobelev, was 'Aug Lang Sygne.'

The *Revue des Deux Mondes* very recently contained a critical estimate of Mr. Lecky's historical writings. What, according to the French critic, are the titles of Mr. Lecky's books? 'The Leaders of the Irish Opinion,' 'History of the Rise and Influence of the Rationalism,' and 'History of the European Morals.' Just imagine a prominent English writer criticising, say in the *Nineteenth Century*, the works of one of the most distinguished contemporary men of letters in France, and yet absolutely ignorant of the use of the French definite article! Another English title-page has also recently gone wrong. *Le Siècle*, referring to the late Richard Jefferies, and informing us in passing that he was born in 'the Weltshire,' places among his works one which it speaks of as *Le Patron de Jeu chez-lui*. To turn the *Gamekeeper at Home* into the *Gaming-House-keeper at Home* is hard on an author.

A French dramatic critic recently burst out with enthusiasm: 'Who does not know "The Midnight" of Shakespeare?' This was the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* of the divine William's. M. Georges Ohnet is also acquainted with the 'Schyllock' of the

same author. Longfellow, we are told, was the author of 'Hiacantha.' The reader of Anthony Trollope's Autobiography will doubtless remember that Trollope's first published story brought in to its author 'douze cents francs, six shillings, et neuf pences.' The Mrs. Frances Trollope of the same very literary family is known to the Frenchman as 'Mistress Trollops.' M. Alphonse Daudet gets a shade nearer correctness when in *L'Évangéliste* he alludes to this lady as 'Mistress Trollope.' M. Catulle Mendès, translating a story by Edgar Allan Poe, speaks about 'Myster' Blackwood, and 'le Blackwood Magazine.' English magazines and reviews, indeed, fare almost exceptionally ill at the hands of the literary Frenchman. The 'Edinburg' Review is a mere peccadillo. A canon of Clermont Cathedral, and member of many learned societies, writes about 'le Gentleman Magazine.' The *Foreign Review* appears as 'le Foreing Review,' just as the Frenchman insists on talking of the 'Foreing Office,' and we have such curiosities as 'le Macmillian magazine' and 'The Englisch woman's Rewiew.'

Indeed, proper names of every kind are a constant stumbling-block. There is one initial difficulty in this department with which the French writer has terrible times. He cannot manage the abbreviations. 'Mrs.' is always 'Mistress' when it is not 'mistress' or 'missis,' and the word, as M. Max O'Rell in one of his little books is careful to inform us, is to be pronounced 'missise.' If a French writer ever does venture on the 'Mrs.' the result is almost always a mockery. A volume written by a French visitor to England in 1886 contained various references to, let us say, 'Mrs. Black and Jones.' This, if not altogether satisfactory, was at least an improvement on the unhappy 'mistress.' But the grateful English reader had not gone far before he discovered that 'Mrs. Black and Jones' were bank-directors, and it very soon became evident that 'Mrs.' was only the ingenious Frenchman's way of writing 'Messrs.'

An English gentleman is always 'mister' when he is not 'myster.' One French author is careful to tell us how to use this word in really good and idiomatic English. Suppose, says he, one should wish to translate into English the following French sentence:—

MONSIEUR,—*Je vous annonce l'arrivée de M. votre fils, William Johnson, à Paris.*

This is the correct English version:—

SIR,—I inform you of the arrival of your mister son William Johnson at Paris.

The famous M. Cherbuliez, in one of his novels, makes an English lady sign her letters as 'Lady Aurora Rovel.' In a story in last year's *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Mr. E. A. Bond, late chief librarian of the British Museum, figures as 'sir Francis Bound.' Another French writer tells us that short, pet names for English girls and boys are, for instance, 'Bettesy,' 'Enry,' 'Cary,' 'Tomy,' 'Samy.' The correct way to speak of Mr. Young, Junior, is to call him 'Young-Younger.' In the estimation of the French novelist, ordinary English proper names are such as 'Holophern Rush,' 'mister Higglingsbottom,' and 'M. Jasper Stiffneckham.' M. Armande Silvestre revels in such appellations as 'le révérend Jack Botum,' 'mylord Humphrey Littleboob,' and 'Lord Doublebeett.' Another writer gives us 'Colonel Cowentry' and 'Sir Hug,' who also appears as 'sir Hug Esquire.' Rich Americans are of course represented as men of title; while the only correct and really English way of addressing a 'baronnet' is to call him 'milord.' 'Milord Chatam' is as correctly as a patriotic Frenchman could be expected to spell the name of the first Pitt. Whether 'sir J. Bright' is or is not a 'baronnet' does not appear; perhaps he is only an instance of 'knighthood.' Mr. Chamberlain, it seems, was lately 'le home secretary.' It is also well to remember that a common parliamentary title is 'the righthonourable,' when, indeed, it is not 'honourables sirs.'

But let us pass on; for, as the Frenchman reminds us, 'times is money.' Let us wander into the department of 'highlif.' A party in very 'highlif' indeed is spoken of as a 'house-party extra cream.' This is the world that is 'ob-or-nob' with princes and dukes; that goes to the selectest 'pique-niques;' that, as one authority tells us, takes 'lunch à cinq heures,' or, as a more knowing hand has it, drinks tea at 'fiveoclocque;' that rides in 'breaks' or 'breacks' that are always arriving 'au grand trot;' the world for which 'the season opens by the University Boat-races;' the world in which the woman's duty is 'shopper,' the man's 'yachter,' and everyone's 'luncher' and 'flirter.' This is the world where the lord says to his visitor, '*Gentleman*, asseyons-nous et causons;' where, say at the 'Gaity's' theatre, one young blood addresses another with 'Aoh! my old fellow!' and where ladies, gentlemen, 'clubmans'—free from any vulgar mixture of 'goody-gaudy' persons—accost one another with 'un vigoureux shakehand.' These are the delightful people who flock to the

play to see a 'Scrape of Paper,' neither can Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan ever weary them with 'Her Majesty's Pinafore.' Whether they care so much for the performances of the 'Solfa-tonic' College or of the 'Musical Antiquarium Society' does not appear. It is not probable, however, that they would be much exhilarated by the doings of the 'Christi' Minstrels, or, as the same company figures elsewhere, the 'Christian' Minstrels; but they would certainly flock in crowds to 'Saint-James-Hall' to hear the tenor who is known indifferently as 'Seems-Reeve' or 'Seems-Rews.' In May you are sure to meet them all, with a fair sprinkling of 'clergymans' among them, gazing at themselves (and at the pictures) at 'Burlington Academy,' which seems like the name of some suburban educational establishment. It was for all these rich and distinguished persons that in 1867, when the Exhibition filled Paris with foreigners, of whom the English were not the fewest, a French writer sat down to produce a guide-book. He meant it exclusively for 'higlif' and the fashionable world, but his mastery over the English language was hardly equal to his daring in the use of it. In his preface he cheerfully announced himself and his guide-book as the '*vademecum de tous les snobs.*' This indeed is, as a contemporary French baron curiously remarks, '*Oh! quite!! too!!! utter!!!!*'

With the everyday life of our streets and the ways of the London 'cokneys' the Frenchman is just as familiar as with 'higlif extra cream.' In the old days he used to know all about 'Wauxhall,' or 'Faxhall,' and 'Ranelash;' now he is equally at home in 'Saint-John-Wood,' 'Camden Town,' 'Saint-Gilles,' or the 'Hay-Marbret.' He studies our public charities and can tell us all about our 'alm'shouses;' he investigated the doings of the defunct Board of Works, and is great upon the 'metropolitain-building-sact.' He knows that the Londoner travels on the 'metropolitain' or other railway with 'trough-tickets' or 'throught-tickets;' that he escapes from London altogether by 'excursions-trains,' or travels by night in 'slee-ping cars;' that he buys the flower for his button-hole from the 'flower's girls,' and his newspaper from the 'new-boys,' or the 'paper's boys.' For his evening paper the 'skilld woorkman' need not pay more than a 'demi-penny.' If he wants 'a grog,' or 'a whisky,' can he not go to the 'spirits shops,' or to the 'ciders cellars,' or to the 'cole-hole' Tavern in the Strand, or to the 'bar du Wapping'? With his 'breekfast' egg the Londoner

eats some 'toasts;' he can consume a couple of 'sandwichs' at any odd moment; he can do wonders in the way of consumption of 'beefstecks,' 'bifteks,' 'beefteaks,' 'beefsteacks,' and 'rumsteacks.' If he dines with 'le lor-maire' he of course eats 'a turtle-soup;' if he cares to drink in the American fashion, he can have 'coktels' and 'sherry-gobler.' In Ireland, as we read in a Home-Rule story by M. Elie Poirée, he will doubtless be able to find the hostelry kept by 'Michael Snydden, licensed to sell wines, bier, and spirits, no licenseds sundays.'

The device of the Yankee, a French writer assures us, is, 'Catch money, my son, honestly if you can, but catch money.' The device of the modern French novelist is, 'Catch English, my pen, correctly if you can, but catch English.' Let him persevere, and the correctness may come in time. On this linguistic side, we will apply to him his own felicitous quotation: 'Cheer, boy, cheer, you wil see better days.' Meanwhile, we will readily admit to him that the laugh is by no means all on our side. Our novelists, and especially our lady novelists, far too often find their native English insufficient for them, and boldly plunge into French with the most extraordinary results. But a consideration of this side of the subject would be more interesting to French than to English readers.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON.

It is characteristic, perhaps, of English feeling, that the patron saint of England, alone among all the saints of the Church, should be mounted on horseback. Yet that noble equestrian martyr, who still appears in all his panoply upon our half-crowns and our sovereigns, careering gaily over the body of his supernatural foe, began life, there is every reason to suppose, not on the Yorkshire moors, but, in quite another sense than that intended by Mrs. Malaprop, as an allegory on the banks of Nile. For the early history and evolution of St. George, indeed, we have to look far back into the mists of ages, and far away from that horse-loving land where the mythical and redoubtable saint now tramples so fearlessly on the still more mythical and redoubtable dragon.

‘Once upon a time,’ says the Mock Turtle in ‘Alice,’ with a deep-drawn sigh, ‘I was a real turtle.’ ‘And once upon a time,’ the dragon upon whom St. George is trampling might remark, ‘I was a realistic crocodile.’ Strange as it seems, every step in the metamorphosis by which the old Egyptian god Horus became transformed into an orthodox Christian saint, while the Egyptian crocodile beneath his feet became simultaneously transfigured into his vanquished reptilian enemy, has now been worked out in full by historians or antiquaries: and the holy man whom Gibbon so cruelly accused of being a fraudulent pork-contractor of heretical views has had his good fame vindicated from that irreverent charge only to be identified by more modern criticism with the hawk-headed heathen deity of some forgotten Nile village in the days of the Pharaohs.

To get down to the very first foundations of St. George we must go back to the earliest religion of the Egyptian people, which consisted of an equal and impartial admixture of totemism and ancestor-worship. Now, totems have become so exceedingly fashionable of late years, through the assiduous efforts of Mr. Andrew Lang and others, that it behoves every pure and blameless ratepayer, at the present day, however naturally averse to such abstruse studies, to know something about them, lest he should blush for his ignorance in the circles of esoteric culture: so I shall make no

apology for briefly explaining that a totem is an animal or plant—most often an animal—which the members of a particular clan or tribe, alike among Red Indians, early Asiatic races, and Australian black-fellows, consider themselves bound to respect and venerate. As a rule, the clan is called by the name of the animal it adores, being known as Crows or Jackals, Wolves or Bears, Kangaroos or Wombats, as the case may be. However, every member of the Bear tribe pays the greatest deference to a bear, wherever found, and particularly abstains from eating bear's flesh. Every Kangaroo worships kangaroos, and would far sooner eat his fellow creatures of the Bear or Wombat totem than indulge in kangaroo-meat, which would be considered indeed as rank cannibalism. The totem is regarded as one flesh with the clan, and to harm the totem is to do evil, as it were, to the embodied clan-spirit.

In Egypt totemism at a very early period formed the prevalent cult of a large part of the people. In later days, to be sure, as creeds grew more refined, it developed into the worship of animal-headed gods: of Apis, who represented the original sacred bull; of Anubis, who recalled the primitive holy jackal; of Pasht, the cat-goddess, and Sekhet, the lion-goddess; and of Thoth, the recorder, with the ibis-head. But in earlier times, when religion was more naïve, it was probably the actual animals themselves that were considered sacred on their own account; and till a very late date this original sanctity continued to attach to the holy beasts and birds, as the immense number of mummied hawks, cats, ibises, and bulls brought to light in every excavation among the Nile-side cemeteries sufficiently shows. Holy hawks, in particular, are a perfect nuisance to tourists in Upper Egypt: the fellaheen seem to imagine that every member of Mr. Cook's personally conducted parties must be animated with but one insatiable desire in life, the passion for possessing a perfect necropolis of mummified and malodorous birds of prey.

But totemism is a creed that necessarily leads at times to slight misunderstandings among its various votaries. As each village or town had its own special totem in early times, and as some of these totems were natural enemies one of the other, it followed perforce that the god of one district was often the hereditary foe and utter abomination of another. When all your religious feelings, for example, are centred upon a cat, your attitude towards dogs must almost necessarily be one of strong

theological prejudice. People who revered the ibis, or the heron, could hardly fail to regard with bitter aversion the kites and kestrels that killed and ate their tribal god; people who offered up prayers to the bat or the asp were scarcely likely to admire and respect the jackal or the owl who waged war against their own living and multiple deities. Hence it arose that religious feuds of a somewhat exasperated character often existed between adjacent villages, whose gods were at strife one with the other; or whose deities, as Juvenal bluntly puts it, grew in their own gardens for others to devour. Among all these feuds, none was more celebrated than that which smouldered on ceaselessly between the worshippers and the enemies of the divine crocodile. It must be frankly admitted that to anybody who did not regard crocodiles as sacred beings the temptation to take pot-shots at them as they basked on a sandbank in the muddy Nile must have been almost irresistible. At any rate, it is matter of historical fact that there were crocodile-worshipping and crocodile-hating towns all along the river highway; and the latter frequently behaved in a most unfeeling and irreverent way towards the deities of the former. Party spirit sometimes ran so high on these occasions that, if we may believe Juvenal, a late but well-informed and travelled authority, pitched battles were fought over the religious differences, and the victors went so far in their pious zeal as to kill and eat, with every expression of joy, the enemies of their ancestral totem.

The district of the Fayoum, to the west of Nile, was one of those where the sacred reptile was most particularly venerated: for in early times crocodiles, whose contemplative noses are now seldom seen projecting from the water below the First Cataract, were common objects of the country all along the great river, and are represented in such mural paintings as those on the well-known tomb of Tih at Sakkara as swarming in the backwaters about Memphis itself, almost as far north as the modern town of Cairo. The scaly beast was so holy an object in the old Fayoum, indeed, that he gave his name to the *nome* or district, and to the city of Crocodilopolis: while the famous Labyrinth, that wonder of the world, which Herodotus regarded as even a more gigantic piece of work than the Pyramids themselves, contained as its main title to sanctity the magnificent tombs of the sacred mummified reptiles. On the other hand, the adjacent province of Heracleopolis was 'death on crocodiles,' as an American archæologist irreverently

phrases it; and it was the hatred of the Heracleopolitans for the unmannerly god of their next-door neighbours that led at last to the destruction of the Labyrinth itself, of which hardly any remains now exist in a recognisable condition. Nor were these strained relations without a due cause: for the sacred animal of Heracleopolis happened to be the ichneumon; and, as the ichneumon ekes out a precarious livelihood by stealing and eating the crocodile's eggs, it was natural enough that diplomatic difficulties should occasionally arise between the devotees of the eater and the partisans of the eaten.

The people of Tentyris, the modern Denderah, where you land for the great Ptolemaic temple, were also professed enemies of the crocodile, which was the ancestral god of their rivals at Omboo. They figured as professional crocodile-killers, and in later days gave exhibitions at Rome of the courage and skill with which they dragged from the water their hereditary enemy. Naturally such displays were little to the taste of those pious souls in other places who excavated the crocodile mummy-pits of Maabdeh, and filled them with the dried and perfumed remains of innumerable defunct reptilian deities. Nor could the crocodiles themselves have enjoyed these brusque geographical variations of popularity. It must undoubtedly have been rough upon a contemplative reptile, with a fine sense of continuity, to be treated with divine honours in one village, and chivied for his life by a roaring and bloodthirsty mob in the next.

This native antagonism between the various gods of various Nile-side regions made the construction of a national Egyptian pantheon, it may readily be believed, a matter of some delicacy and difficulty of adjustment. How to include in the common mythology the crocodile himself and the crocodile's deadliest foe was a problem of constructive religion that tasked all the most abstruse resources of the priestly intellect. Still, in the end, the thing got done somehow. After Upper and Lower Egypt, with all their nomes, were firmly united under a single, strong, centralised government, a sort of *modus vivendi* was established at last between the hostile local gods of the different villages, and a few of those belonging to the largest towns or most prominent families were elevated into the front rank in the national Walhalla as first-class deities. Among them, three of the most famous were those Upper Egyptian gods of the mystic triad—Osiris, Isis, and the boy Horus.

Who or what Horus was precisely in his very earliest beginnings it is happily no part of my present task to decide offhand. Heaven forbid that I should so trench on the private preserves and happy hunting-grounds of the orthodox Egyptologists, each of whom is prepared to write a long and mystical volume on the origin, development, and interpretation of the Horus-myth. He may, for aught I know to the contrary, have been the rising sun, the god of light, the avenger of Osiris in his battle with the powers of darkness, or he may only have been the heir-general and later representative of some early hawk-totem, worshipped in primitive times by the good folk of Abydos, his sacred city. It is enough for my present purpose that he is often represented with a hawk's head, and that he frequently stands upon a vanquished crocodile, the first rough draft or rudimentary form of the mediæval dragon.

In most of the pretty little bronze figures of Horus that adorn the cabinets of the Boulak Museum at Cairo the god merely poises himself solidly upon a squat, flat crocodile, which lies still under his feet, and appears to accept its fate in very good part, with true reptilian apathy. But in certain other statuettes of a more vigorous type the character of the sculpture approaches the modern conception of St. George, both in the triumphant attitude of the god and the recalcitrant struggles of the conquered beast; and there is one little group in the Louvre to which M. Clermond-Ganneau has called particular attention, which at once gives us the clue to the origin of the mediæval champion saint. It is a bas-relief sculptured in Egypt in the late Roman period, and it represents the hawk-headed god in full armour on horseback, in the act of killing a very respectable and developed dragon of most properly draconian ferocity and vigour. Had the head been wanting, in fact, the Egyptian deity would unhesitatingly have been taken by all observers for an early representation of the Christian saint.

When Christianity first began to spread in the East, it is well known that the Oriental peoples often eagerly adapted symbols or emblems of their familiar religion to the ideas and mysteries of the new and purer faith. Thus the Tau, or *crux ansata*, that odd handle-bearing symbol, which Egyptian deities held in their hands as a mark of their divine nature, got curiously mixed up in early Coptic monuments with the Christian cross; and the figures of the saints were readily adapted to the pre-existing types

of heathen gods or goddesses, as one can clearly see in the Ghizeh collection. Each town or district during this transitional period was likely to choose for its special patron the Christian martyr or virgin who most nearly approached its own earlier local god in character or attributes. The transition in this way became less abrupt and startling; the people would worship the new saints at the old-accustomed shrines, and under the guise of images that closely recalled their antique deities. In Egypt this feeling was even stronger than elsewhere, as might be expected from the eminently conservative character of the Egyptian mind, and indeed for some centuries the Christianity of the Nile valley was little more than a veiled heathenism, with the old gods worshipped under new names, though still almost identical in form and feature.

Now, during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods Horus had long grown to be almost the most conspicuous god of the popular pantheon, and it was not strange, therefore, that the Egyptian people should choose for their patron saint under the new creed a sort of Christianised and etherialised version of their hawk-headed deity. They found in St. George—that mystic Cappadocian St. George—the very saint they wanted: a saint dim, obscure, characteristically mysterious; a conqueror of the powers of darkness; a victorious dragon-hunter; a mere ancient god, thinly sprinkled with holy water, but still retaining in his white horse, green dragon, and other quaint accessories the later fashionable emblems of the old divine Egyptian crocodile-tamer.

Who the real historical St. George was, or whether even there was ever a live St. George at all, is one of those moot questions of hagiology on which it ill becomes the general anthropological inquirer to have any opinion of any sort in the present state of our knowledge. The correct belief upon the subject is that the original Georgios was a Cappadocian saint and martyr, who had been a soldier of the Empire, and who was massacred for his faith in the last heathen persecution under Diocletian. However that may be, the cult of Georgios spread rapidly in the East. He suited exactly the Oriental mind. To put it briefly, he was an allegorical saint, and the mystic East always loves allegory. So, in the first flush of the new Imperial faith, Constantine built a church in his honour at Byzantium, the parent church of all those San Giorgios and St. Georges which still abound throughout the whole of Christendom. Thence St. George spread by degrees to all

parts of the world, though his vogue was greatest at first—and indeed always—in the Greek or Greek-speaking provinces of the Christianised empire.

It was in Egypt itself, no doubt, that the allegory of St. George first took definite shape. 'The warrior saint, contending with the dragon,' as Miss Yonge puts it, 'and delivering the oppressed Church,' was quite in the very best style of Egyptian allegory and Egyptian mysticism. The personification of the powers of darkness in the old serpent of the Nile reproduced in full the local tone of thought. During those early ages of half-heathen Gnosticism, while the faith of Christ and the faith of Osiris lived on in strange confusion side by side, St. George gradually took the place of Horus, as St. Theodore seems also to have done in the curious image trampling on a crocodile which balances the Lion of St. Mark on the Piazzetta at Venice. Gibbon indeed has tried to show, with some acerbity of tone, that St. George was originally an Arian saint, and that the dragon whom he successfully resisted was indeed no other than the orthodox Athanasius, the pillar of faith in Alexandria. But in Gibbon's time the real connection of ideas between the ancient and modern creeds was but little understood, and a certain personal bias in favour of believing any evil of any saint whatsoever most probably misled the historian of the 'old, familiar Decline and Fall,' as Mr. Silas Wegg affectionately called it, into unjust aspersions on the character of the Cappadocian martyr. It was his resemblance to Horus rather than his resistance to Athanasius that seized and impressed the Egyptian fancy. Or rather, may we not hold that George himself was but a Christianised form of Horus in person, and that the dragon on which he tramples was the ecclesiastical and allegorical counterpart of the subdued crocodile?

To this very day St. George is still the patron saint of the Coptic Church in Egypt. That is natural enough. The descendants of Horus-worshippers would stick by preference to the Christianised Horus-saint. But how on earth did he come to be also the patron saint of far Western Britain? 'It is difficult,' says Mr. Loftie, 'to persuade a Copt Christian that his guardian saint, with the same white horse, green dragon, and other accessories, holds a similar tutelary post in England. The most credulous as well as the most reasonable Copt immediately rejects this statement as a glaring impossibility; and the question, "What can our

St. George have to do with England?" might perplex the most plausible or the most pious of the Crusaders.'

Nevertheless there *is* a connection, and it was the Crusaders themselves to whom we owe it. During the early ages of the Church St. George remained an essentially Eastern and Greek saint, who never, I believe, made any excursions westward into the uncertain domains of Latin Christendom. I have nowhere met with him in early Western literature or Church dedications. But all over Greece and the Levant the equestrian martyr was a prime favourite, and Venice, when she stole the body of St. Mark from the monks of Alexandria, completed her theft by borrowing San Giorgio as her second patron saint from Corfu and her other Ionian possessions. When the Crusaders went east to fight for the Holy Sepulchre against the dragon of Islam they found St. George in full possession of the field; and it was no wonder that those mailed and horse-loving knights chose the warrior saint for their especial veneration. He was the sort of holy man a Crusader could thoroughly understand and sympathise with. Their fancy beheld him sometimes in the thick of the fray, heading their forces on his fiery white horse, as Santiago had headed the Galician army in its onslaught against the Paynim Moors of Granada. From that time forth St. George's fortune as a patron saint was fairly made. Burgundy and Aquitaine were the first to adopt him as the model of chivalry; and when Richard Cœur de Lion, the son of Eleanor of Aquitaine, went crusading on his own account, he left his island realm under St. George's protection, as it has ever since remained, in spite of Protestants or Puritans. 'St. George for merry England!' was the mediæval battle-cry that rang with such effect upon a thousand fields, and in the legend of the Seven Champions of Christendom St. George was chosen as the special representative of the English nation in its ecclesiastical capacity.

Being himself a mighty horseman, the warrior saint naturally developed into the great patron of British and foreign knight-hood. 'In the name of St. Michael and St. George I dub thee knight,' was the common formulary of investiture throughout half Europe; and, as Miss Yonge justly remarks, no saint in the calendar had half so many orders of chivalry instituted in his honour as the unknown Cappadocian, who by gradual steps had usurped the outer signs and prerogatives of Horus, superannuated. Even in our own day St. George remains the patron saint of the

Order of the Garter, and St. George's Chapel at Windsor recalls the ancient connection alike by its name, its banners, and its knightly stalls. For the colonies and dependencies (out of special compliment, I believe, in the first instance, to Malta and the Ionian Islands) the Order of St. Michael and St. George combines in one breath both the fighting saints, each of them victors over his own particular dragon, on earth or in heaven. From the most noble of these two bodies, the 'George and Garter' has become a common sign for village inns, and a standing subject for the local painter's imaginative efforts. To such base uses do we come at last! Horus and the Crocodile end their days finally as sprawling antagonists on the daubed signboard of the 'George' at Little Peddlington or Giggleswick Episcopi.

Strange to say, though St. George was the patron saint of England from the Crusades onward, George was never a favourite Christian name in our island till a very recent period, and had hardly a representative in the royal family who built St. George's Chapel at Windsor till an elector of Hanover brought it over, as it were, by accident, to the land of his adoption. To be sure, there was just once a George of Clarence, brother of Edward IV., to uphold the dignity of the great English saint; but, as *he* got drowned, according to popular belief, in a butt of malmsey, whatever that may be, the experiment was hardly of a kind to provoke imitation, and the Georges retired thenceforth into the obscurity of private life, till 'the glorious House of Hanover and Protestant succession' once more dragged them forth into the fierce light that, according to the official poet of their dynasty, beats upon a throne. Up till 1700 Georges were almost unknown in our parish registers; after that date, out of compliment to the Faith's Defender, they began to appear in shoals, side by side with the Augustuses, Fredericks, Charlottes, and Sophias whom the new royal family made so popular with our essentially snobbish British parents—a tendency that culminated at last in the famous Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs, the apotheosis, as it were, of fashionable and loyal Georgian nomenclature.

The comparatively modern vogue of George as an English Christian name, however, is well marked in the absence of any common patronymic surname derived from it or its abbreviations. True old English personal names of mediæval date, like John and William, yield us innumerable surnames in general use—such as Johnson and Williamson, Jackson and Wilson, Jones and Williams,

Jenkins and Wilkins, Jenkinson and Wilkinson, all formed on certain known and regular analogies. But we have no Georgesons, no Geordiesons, no Georgekinsees, no Georgekinsons; and even Judson, which has been claimed by some authors as due to a diminutive of George, is really the offspring of the mediæval Judde (a name mentioned by Gower), whose alternative forms we get in our Judds and Judkinsees. To be sure, Mr. Henry George shows us that George as a surname is a genuine reality; but then, names like his, or that of Mr. Henry Richard, or Mr. Mitchell Henry, are really Celtic—mostly Welsh or Cornish—and of very late historical origin. The Richardsons, Dicksons, Hendersons, and Harrisons bear the true old English forms of the patronymic: whenever, as in these other instances, the Christian name stands alone as a surname, without the sign of the possessive case or the addition of the significant word *son*, it is always of recent Cymric adoption. I need hardly add that the made-up name of Fitz-George, in spite of its affectation of Norman antiquity, is an equally recent coinage to cover a special instance. As a whole, St. George, with all his natural advantages as patron saint to the Kingdom of England, has left but a shallow mark upon our English nomenclature, not to compare with those of St. Andrew, St. Patrick, or even poor little sturdy St. David. The Georgias and Georgetowns all belong to the very latest age of British local nomenclature.

Finally, I do not mean dogmatically to assert that every St. George everywhere can be ultimately traced back, by direct descent, to Horus and the Crocodile. There are so many local gods all the world over who fight successfully with dragons or serpents, from Apollo and the Python downward, that various causes may in various places have had special effects in ensuring the vogue of the warrior saint. In certain instances, for example, there can be little doubt that dedications to St. George cover a Christianisation of the same dragon-conquering Celtic deity who elsewhere receives baptism under the guise of St. Michael, and to whom all airy sites and high mountain-peak chapels are apt to be consecrated. In Greece, once more, there is actually a 'Drunken St. George,' before the platform of whose church, as Mr. Bent has told us, a wild orgy of intoxication takes place once a year, under the auspices of the priests, on the day after the wine-pressing; and this most disreputable member of the Eastern calendar can hardly be any other than the modern representative of our abandoned old Hellenic friend Dionysus,

turned by a verbal juggle from a wicked heathen to an equally wicked Christian. Elsewhere, too, there are legends about St. George which seem to show him as more or less related in local imagination to the Scandinavian Odin, the Teutonic Woden, and the mystic Wild Huntsman of mediæval fancy. But as a whole, when we consider the peculiar connection of St. George with Egypt, and the slow course of his gradual westward diffusion through Alexandria, Venice, Constantinople, and the Crusaders, I think there can be very little doubt, in view of the facts here detailed, that the saint himself in his central features reproduces the hawk-headed god of the Nile valley, while the dragon is but an elongated and mythical form of the vanquished crocodile upon which Horus tramples. And, if anybody wishes to know how much Egyptian mysticism still clings unsuspected to the familiar image of St. George and the Dragon on the obverse of our every-day metallic currency, he has only to transmute, by a well-known alchemistic process, a few half-crowns at any bookseller's into the alternative form of Mr. Hargrave Jennings's wierd and fantastic treatise on the Rosicrucians; and there he may read, in the very profound and absurd chapter on the Order of the Garter, more astonishing nonsense about this simple subject than I should care to transcribe in black and white on the blushing face of my innocent foolscap. For whenever Egypt has had a hand in anything it seems somehow to breed a sort of mystical madness, of its own mere motion, from Piazzì Smyth on the Great Pyramid to the myth of Osiris or the legend of Horus-St. George and the Crocodile-dragon.

'THE 'BUS.'

THE thrifty and the needy, the sempstress with scantily-lined purse, the actress coming from Camden Town to old Drury, the pinched and ever-pinching curate, oppressed by his boys at school, should all think kindly of the worthy Shillibeer, who, on July 4 in the year 1829, started the first 'harmless, necessary' 'bus seen in London. Shillibeer was not, as might be expected, a livery-stable keeper or job-master, but an undertaker, on an extensive scale in the City Road; thus carrying his fellow-citizens in life and in death—to the Bank, and to the grave. So lately as the time of the first Exhibition, in 1851, the firm was still pursuing its more lugubrious department; witness their inviting appeal to foreign visitors to the great show: 'Aux étrangers! Pompes funèbres sur le système de la Compagnie Générale des Pompes Funèbres à Paris, à Shillibeer's, City Road, near Finsbury, où l'on parle Français. Catholic fittings from Paris.' It is not unlikely that the peculiar form of the professional vehicle, the mutes, on the journey home, seated aloft, as on a 'knife-board,' may have suggested our now familiar 'bus. The 'germ' of the omnibus was of course an old one, and was to be found in the various 'stages,' coaches, and diligences, where a number of persons were conveyed long distances in one common vehicle. Mr. Charles Knight, indeed, recalls some experiments made in the year 1800, when a lumbering vehicle, running on six wheels and drawn by four horses, was plying in London for short distances, but was not very successful. An old Irish reminiscence also 'minded the time' when a stage of similar character, on eight wheels, worked in 1792 between Dublin and Seapoint, a suburb about four miles off. There was here a hotel or boarding-house of some fashion, where Charles Matthews was fond of staying.

The truth is, however, that we owe the invention to our so-called 'lively neighbours.' A retired officer named Baudry, living at Nantes, had established baths at Richebourg, which, he found, were patronised not so extensively as he desired. He accordingly in 1827 started a sort of general car to transport his customers, which plied between the baths and the centre of the town. Baudry, later, set up his vehicle at Bordeaux and also at

Paris; but, as in so many other cases where the community is benefited, the invention flourished, though at the expense of the inventor. In 1829 forage was dear, the roads bad; the undertaking ruined the luckless Baudry, who is said to have died of disappointment. It was in this year that the enterprising undertaker sent out the first London 'bus, which, according to a now defunct Dublin newspaper, 'Saunders' Newsletter,' 'excited considerable notice, from the novel form of the carriage and the elegant manner in which it is fitted out. We apprehend it would be almost impossible to make it overturn, owing to the great width. It is drawn by three beautiful bays abreast, after the French fashion. It is a handsome machine.' It then describes how 'the new vehicle, called the *omnibus*, commenced running this morning from Paddington to the City.' It started from the 'Yorkshire Stingo' and carried twenty-two passengers inside at a charge of a shilling or sixpence according to distance. To carry eleven passengers on each side it must have been nearly double the length of the present form of vehicle, and of the size and appearance of one of the large three-horse Metropolitan Railway 'buses. An odd feature of the arrangement was that the day's newspaper was supplied for the convenience of the passengers! There must have been some fixed limit for the time of perusal, otherwise the gentleman who had it 'in hand' might have continued his studies during the whole journey. The worthy Shillibeer, it may be added, was an inventor also, in his own special line, and to him we—or his generation—owe a 'Patent Funeral Carriage.' He was examined before the Board of Health, not on the wonderful improvement which revolutionised locomotion, but on the question of 'extra-mural interment.'

The name given to this useful and popular vehicle was certainly a happy one. It has been suggested with some ingenuity that the French inventor borrowed it from a Bordeaux grocer named Omnez, living opposite his office, and who had set up the inscription, 'Omnes omnibus.' This suggests the happy jest of a London wit, who translated the hearse by *Mors omnibus!* In the palmy days of the opera there was the large 'omnibus' box, close to the stage, which held a number of noble amateurs who each paid for their seat. All over the Continent the word 'omnibus' is accepted; but in England the independent crowd, disdaining the unfamiliar outlandish term, fashioned a convenient term for itself, and among the middle and lower classes 'bus'

is the universal term, though 'omnibus' is well understood. This short, smart, and useful word has perhaps contributed to the popularity of the vehicle itself. Grant the vulgarity of the sound to ears too polite, and the shock it would be to delicate lips constrained to utter such a note; still, 'the 'bus waits,' or 'is coming round,' or 'is full,' or, worst of all, 'the last 'bus'—actually the title of a pleasant music-hall ditty, chorussed by the whole house—are familiar terms that will always be in vogue, and do useful service.

Further, the 'bus betokens a form of social life and even discipline. It signifies the independence of women, for girls and single ladies may travel safely under its sacred ægis. They enjoy an almost vestal sanctity; and though we read of strange familiar acquaintances formed at street crossings, or 'picked up' at exhibitions, shops, &c., we never hear of such irregularities in the 'bus. There reigns an almost frozen reserve; even the most familiar respects its unwritten law. Perhaps the other passengers, all eyes and ears, their hands on their umbrellas, and with nothing else to do, act as a self-appointed police. It is a school also for the elementary courtesies. If coin has to be passed down to the conductor a dozen hands eagerly compete for the office. The familiar phrase 'to oblige a lady' has its origin in the appeal to some one to give up his seat and go outside aloft in the rain. These may seem trifles, but he who has travelled long and often in the 'bus must be, if not a better, at least a more courteous man. It is curious that that acute observer Dickens has in his novels made little or no use of the machinery, the reason possibly being that in his day it had not developed to any serious proportions. On the other hand, imitators who came after him, such as Albert Smith, made large use of the omnibus, which formed part of the 'properties' in their pictures of middle-class life. 'The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury' really supplies an interesting view of a now vanished form of life and manners. When Clapham and Islington were really suburbs, and when people had 'to go to London' much as persons at Norwood or Surbiton have now, the 'bus passed the door every morning, taking up the head of the house, going into the City. The numberless 'Paragons,' and 'Circuses,' and 'Terraces,' now so forlorn and run to seed, were then centres of life and flourished exceedingly: and the 'bus, as the medium of communication, held a high and important position,

There is a curious contrast between the London simple, if rough and ready, omnibus system, and that in vogue at Paris, where it is elaborated with all the precision of a railway. At fixed points there are stations, where tickets must be taken which admit according to the order of the numbers. There is, or used to be, the 'Correspondence,' the one ticket carrying you over various cross lines. But this can only be done effectively when tickets are issued at a *bureau*. The French public seems always helpless in the hands of a company, who in all cases have the air of doing their clients a favour. It is only reasonable that they should be entitled to adopt effectual precautions against fraud, even at the cost of some inconvenience. Not a penny, it is believed, is lost through this dishonest form of leakage. Again, the system of railway omnibuses is far more developed with our neighbours than it is with us; and every one will recall the long line of such vehicles that wait at every station, and which most prudent persons with much luggage invariably use when going to hotels. The private 'bus is a necessary adjunct to every hotel abroad, and these vehicles with their clamorous attendants are found waiting for every train. The Metropolitan Railway has its great three-horse railway omnibus, said to have been introduced from Manchester, and whose driver, by some mysterious law, is exceptionally and oddly protected from the rain by a strange mechanical umbrella, fixed, penthouse like, over his head. His brethren disdain such shelter.

It was only a few years ago that omnibuses were established by the English railway companies for the convenience of their passengers. The first, as well as the most wholesale of these *entrepreneurs* was the North-Western, which started with a large number, some forty or fifty. The well-to-do family has taken heartily to the system, with a genuine 'for this relief much thanks.' The anxious father, with wife, little ones, and maids to move, together with appropriate luggage, despatches a postcard the day before and finds at his door betimes, sometimes to the instant, the useful vehicle, with its civil, responsible driver, and will find himself quit for a few shillings: quit also of angry discussion and extortion.

A great change in the London omnibus organisation took place at the end of the year 1855, when a vast financial scheme was prepared for the purpose of buying up the various 'lines' of vehicles and of forming one large company. There was much

astonishment when it was discovered that this scheme had been matured in Paris, where also the large sums necessary had been subscribed. It was called 'La Compagnie Générale et Anglo-Française des Omnibus.' There was, indeed, then no lack of opportunity for reform in every point of view. The 'bus at this time was a low-class vehicle, small, ill-ventilated and ill-smelling, with plenty of damp straw for the feet, a door and a window, both generally kept closed. The 'knife-board' aloft, a painful seat, was reached with risk, and required skill to attain. All the various lines, or 'Times' as they were called, were in the hands of some fifty proprietors; some of a larger species, such as the Wilsons, were owners of the well-known 'Favourites,' a name borrowed from Paris in the early days, where there was a line known as *Les Favorites*. The Wilsons had omnibuses in Dublin and other leading towns, and they employed some fifty 'buses with 500 horses. The new company had a delicate and difficult task before them in securing these lines; not only had they to take the stock and vehicles, but they had also to buy up what was more valuable, the 'Times,' or goodwill, of that particular road, there being an understanding that such became a monopoly for the proprietor who was in possession of the route. When it was known that the company had to buy, the price naturally rose. Before starting the new system, they succeeded in purchasing about thirty of the leading lines, leaving about twenty who were certain to come in later.

At this moment there are some half-a-dozen such proprietors—the most notable of whom run the familiar 'Royal Blue,' the green and useful 'Atlas,' the red 'Paddington,' the yellow 'Camden Town'; these, however, are survivals, and have rather an old-fashioned air. The new company promised lavishly; fares were to be reduced, speed increased, new and more roomy vehicles built, and the French system of 'correspondence' introduced. A prize of 100*l.* was offered for a plan of a new omnibus, and the late Mr. George Godwin adjudicated. But this brought no result, and the 'correspondence' system was not found satisfactory. The men, too, were all to wear uniform, with numbers, &c., an idea soon given up. In course of time the undertaking seemed to go on much as it did before, and later nearly all the French directors appear to have 'got out' of the concern. Two only remain at the present time. For a year or two saloon omnibuses of a better class, divided into compartments, were run by the company, but they were withdrawn.

The real and substantial change, that may be said to have revolutionised omnibus travelling, took place a few years ago, when the spirited London Road Car Company was established. We remember the astonishment and ridicule with which their chocolate-coloured cars, drooping down in front on a pair of tiny wheels, with an entrance beside the driver, and, most bizarre of all, rows of chairs on the top! were hailed. Loud was the laughter and sharp the ridicule of the old-established Jehus. The cars were roomy, handsomely upholstered inside, and offered much room and general comfort with an abundance of glass and light. A marvellous change from the straw and hard seats of previous vehicles. These convenient cars were designed by an army captain, who showed much skill in securing balance, lightness, &c. They were 'horsed' in capital style, with fine, strong-quartered, artillery-looking animals, driven at a high speed. In these vehicles there is no longer the old pleasant sociality found in the seats by the driver. That individual is perched aloft in a hutch alone, and is left to commune with his own thoughts; his passengers sit as it were 'on deck,' behind him, and do not speak to the man at the wheel.

By-and-by these vehicles were freshly reformed, the entrance by the driver was found dangerous, a convenient staircase with banisters led up to the roof, and the garden chairs grew into high favour with the fair. Struggling through many difficulties, the Road Car Company has found its reforms adopted by the other lines, which have followed suit in lining their interior with Utrecht velvet, or other handsome material, suggesting the comfort, in some instances, of a first-class railway carriage. One result of this competition has been found in the reduction of fares. Thirty years ago it was thought prodigiously cheap to be taken from Charing Cross to the Bank for threepence, and the tariff was then, roughly, about a penny a mile. Now the passenger is taken to Liverpool Street for a penny! It is astonishing how profit can be made at such rates. It has been explained, however, that the passengers are constantly getting out and changing, many only going a short distance. In Paris it is still threepence for any distance. Since the foundation of the Road Car Company another competitor has appeared in the shape of the London Carriage Company which offer some further novelties in their construction. The wheels are placed under, and not outside, the body of the vehicle, by which it is claimed much more width is

found for the interior. There is more glass, and they also have garden-seats, which is indeed a pleasant, airy mode of seeing London street life. There is gaiety, and even amusement, found in such a jaunt.

Yet another result of these handsome reforms is the abundant patronage of what may be called the higher classes. We know of peeresses and others of high degree who often indulge in an omnibus ride. Ladies and gentlemen, officers, members of 'first-class' clubs even, all patronise the once despised 'bus; nay, meet each other there without shame or shrinking. But the working man is rarely seen on the upholstered cushions, he feels himself uncomfortable and *de trop*. The tram-car is *his* familiar vehicle, and he can ensconce himself there in his mortar-splashed clothes without restraint. We have little doubt that in time the superior class will swoop down on the tram-cars, which will be upholstered and *Utrecht-velveted* up to their taste. The same process is taking place with the third class on the railway—with the Peabody lodging-houses, &c.

The latest development is the light one-horse, conductorless, 'cab-'bus,' as it might be called, which for the ridiculous sum of a halfpenny carries the passenger over short distances, such as that between Charing Cross and Waterloo Station. The ingenious transparent collecting box—an American invention—enables the driver to control his fares without the aid of a conductor. The system enjoys much favour, and even Mr. Mantalini must, in this case, withdraw his finical contempt of the humble coin, which he was so willing should be 'demd.' The new pattern of omnibus that now ranges our streets is really a most thoughtful and ingenious work of design, from the economy of weight and material, and perfect adaptation to the ends sought for. It is also what may be called 'a glass coach,' all the sides forming one continuous window, which supplies airiness and general gaiety. Doors are altogether dispensed with, and stoppage is produced by brakes. Many have been the devices tried—and vain as many—for securing the honesty of the *employés*, and checking the receipts. The pristine, rude method of confiding in the probity of those who receive the cash soon broke down before the irresistible temptation to defraud, and the total deficit of sums kept back soon grew to alarming proportions. The conductors themselves, black-mailed as they were, by the drivers and ostlers, who knew what gains could be made without detection, became helpless; as the demands

On them increased, so did their peculation. The spoliation of 'the yard' was enormous. A system of tickets was tried and found as useless as it was troublesome. The Road Car Company introduced the highly ingenious 'alarm-punch,' still in use on the tramways. Every ticket was punched by a little machine, with a reservoir, in which the pieces thus cut were secured, while a chime sounding at the same moment assured the passenger that his fare had been registered. Habit soon accustomed the passenger to this process, and its omission would be noticed. Fraud, however, is not to be thus baffled; tickets already issued were punched a second time; the inexperienced did not require, and did not receive a ticket, and the 'alarm-punch' came to be abandoned. This company has now adopted tickets in a numbered series, which have to be shown to an inspector, who visits the vehicle at intervals. The 'London General' has a sort of tabulated way-bill affixed to the door, on which the conductor must inscribe each fare in a column denoting its amount. These, however, are all found to be but partial checks, though it is stated that part of the machinery for detection are innocent-looking, apparent 'fares,' who pay with the rest, and who take note of the official's proceedings. But *quis custodiet custodes?* is the main difficulty.

As may be conceived, the business of the largest omnibus company in the world, the 'London General,' has increased steadily. It now 'runs' about nine hundred vehicles, and maintains some nine thousand horses. Each 'bus is served by eleven animals, and the average number of men employed is three thousand. The receipts taken in the last half year amounted to 321,000*l.* The advertisements, which decorate or disfigure the interior, are farmed out to a contractor, and bring in nearly 8,000*l.* a year. Forty-six millions of passengers were carried during six months, and the amount of pennies taken during the working day by each 'bus amounted to between two pounds five and two pounds nine shillings. Twelve thousand tons of food are consumed in each half year, and the cost of each horse is about 23*l.*

SEFTON'S SERVANT.

I.

'Do you know, it does seem odd,' said Mrs. Walton, setting down her cup, and folding her hands. 'Do not you think so?'

'Odd? What, Jane?' Her husband spoke briskly, with a faint note of challenge in his tone. We were sitting, six of us, these two and their four guests, in the courtyard at Bagot Court, taking tea—some of us, I am afraid, taking it cold in the shape of whisky and Apollinaris water. But then the day was hot.

'Mr. Sefton's conduct, James,' Mrs. Walton answered, 'in sending Fred here in this way. It is not that I grudge the man his food and bed, Mrs. Lingard. You know that. In a house like this one or two extra mouths make literally no difference. But I do not understand why he is here. Can you think, Mrs. Lingard, why Mr. Sefton has sent him?'

Sefton, a middle-aged bachelor, had been one of us until a day or two before this—a guest at the Court. Then he had gone to visit the Featherstones near Exeter, taking his valet with him. We had all liked him. There had been no mystery about his movements whatever, and, consequently, our surprise had been great when, twenty-four hours later, his servant had returned, bearing a note from him; in which he asked Mr. Walton to take the man in for a week, and explained that Fred had fallen out with the Featherstones' butler, and found the house uncomfortable. Some would have thought the explanation insufficient, but the Squire was the least suspicious of men, and, without taking counsel, he had wired an affirmative.

Mrs. Lingard, a particular friend of Sefton's, did not hasten to answer; so I said, 'It certainly seems queer to me. Sefton has chambers in London. Why did he not send the man to town, which is nearer to Exeter than Worcestershire? Surely it would have been more natural, as well as more easy, to send him home.'

'Of course it would!' Delves Bagot assented indolently. He was leaning back in his chair, with his eyes on the lawn, which verges on the one open side of the courtyard. 'Or into lodgings at Exeter, where he might have made some use of him. Or to an

hotel—he is rich enough,’ Delves added with a sigh, ‘to pay for his board.’

‘And it is not,’ Mrs. Walton said, ‘as if Mr. Sefton were an intimate friend of ours, though I like him very much. This was his first visit. If Mr. Walton did not know his handwriting, I should be tempted to think the letter a forgery.’

‘It is his letter, safe enough,’ said the Squire brusquely.

Mrs. Lingard ceased drawing patterns on the pavement with the handle of her sunshade and looked up. ‘Sefton is a fool!’ she said airily. ‘Fred can do anything with him—turn him round his finger, Mrs. Walton. He always could. That is so, Lingard, isn’t it?’

‘You ought to know, my dear,’ said the gentleman placidly.

‘Well, he can!’ she answered, with some show of temper. ‘I dare say he has got Sefton under his thumb. You have all got weak places, you men! And your servants know them.’ And Madame finished her whisky and Apollinaris very much as if she liked it. Mrs. Lingard was no favourite with most of us. She was well connected. She had a rich husband. But she had also a villa at Pau, in which she spent half the year, and French polish had long ago hidden any natural good qualities the woman may have possessed. Almost the same might be said of her husband, a lazy, over-fed man, rarely without a French novel in his hand.

‘But,’ said Mr. Walton impatiently, ‘why should Fred wish to be here? You do not think he has come to rob the house, Jane?’

‘To kiss the maids, more likely!’ suggested some one.

‘That is Lingard all over!’ retorted Madame contemptuously. ‘You were walking with my maid this morning, my man! I saw you, and blushed for your taste. She has——’

‘Pooh, pooh!’ from the Squire.

‘No more figure than a backboard!’ triumphantly.

‘Pooh, pooh!’ cried the Squire, still more impatiently; ‘this is all nonsense.’

‘No, James, it is not nonsense,’ said Mrs. Walton placidly.

‘I met Mr. Sefton’s servant on the stairs near the sewing-room very late last night, and he hurried by me in a way I did not at all like. He is a good-looking man, a little above his situation, and I dare say Mr. Sefton has spoiled him. He will set our servants by the ears.’

‘Has it occurred to you,’ I asked, ‘that he may have got into

some slight trouble with the police? And Sefton wants him safe out of the way for a bit?’

‘Nothing more likely,’ quoth Madame, with an evil smile.

‘Well,’ said Mr. Walton, with sudden decision, ‘I will not have him in the house after Saturday.’

I was inwardly making merry and congratulating Mrs. Walton on the cleverness with which she had reached her ends—I had seen them all along—when Mr. Lingard said, ‘Here comes the gentleman in question! And you will see I am right. It is the girls he is after. He has one of them in tow now, the young jackanapes!’

I saw Bagot’s face flush all over. He, as well as Lingard, was sitting facing the lawn. I turned, and, to be sure, there was Fred, a good-looking, slim young fellow, dressed in a tweed suit, which I suppose he thought he might wear, being in mufti. He was crossing the lawn from the gardens with a girl at his side. As I looked the girl—taking from him a basket—left him, and came towards us. It was Bessie—Miss Walton.

Mr. Lingard, in fine, had made a slip. ‘You have made a bad shot this time,’ I said to him coolly. I was not going to help him out of his difficulty.

But, with French airiness, he saw no difficulty, or he had not the grace to apologise. ‘Miss Walton, is it? Well, Mademoiselle is no doubt amusing herself.’

Bagot got up with such violence that his chair went over like a ninepin. Luckily, it was only a wicker one. ‘Come and knock the balls about,’ he said to me, his head very high.

‘All right,’ I assented, and, rising more gently, went with him.

‘Coarse beast!’ he cried, as soon as the door of the billiard-room was closed behind us. ‘I have a good mind to kick him. If that be French politeness, hang French politeness, say I.’

‘With all my heart,’ I answered, choosing a cue.

‘And that woman! After Sefton left she followed me about the place a whole day, wanting to tell my fortune. Pah! it made me sick. She is old enough to be my mother.’

‘She flatters herself,’ I said, pausing upon a cannon, ‘that Master Fred has been sent back to keep an eye upon her—in Sefton’s interest. That is her reading of the riddle.’

‘Rubbish!’ retorted Bagot—he was in a contradictory mood. ‘Sefton is as tired of her as her husband is. What on earth he ever saw in her affectations I cannot imagine.’

'You do not think that Fred is here on her account?'

'Not he! It is some intrigue of his own with the maids. Or—or—oh! I don't know,' he concluded fretfully, striking his ball over the cushion, and grumbling as he sought for it under the fender.

I put down my cue. Delves Bagot and I were old friends. I liked the boy, liked his boyish impulsiveness and frank bearing, and even the obstinacy and self-confidence that were well enough in a Bagot. 'Look here, Delves,' I said, 'why do you not speak to Walton? About Bessie, I mean. You are wretched company at present—in pain yourself, and a cause of pain to others.'

He looked at me angrily; but, seeing me unmoved, relented. 'Well, I intended to speak to him to-day, Brett. And then I heard the old boy talking of the doctor at Ashley who wants to marry Mary Young, and—and about fortune-hunters generally, you know, slanging them up hill and down dale. And I funk'd, that is the truth. You know, except my pay and the three hundred a year rent for this place, I have absolutely nothing.'

'Thanks to old Squire Courtenay.'

'Well, thanks to him and one or two others,' Delves said gloomily.

It was a proverb in the family that a certain Squire Courtenay had started the Bagots downhill by raising money at ruinous interest in the '45. His descendants resented it the more that he had brought his enterprise to a most ignominious end. His twenty thousand guineas had done no one any good, for the old gentleman, riding by night to join the Prince at Derby, had been waylaid and murdered along with his servant, and robbed, of course.

'Well, you may make your mind easy, Delves,' I said. 'Walton would much rather that Bessie married a Bagot with Squire Courtenay for a great-grandfather, to say nothing of the gunpowder gentleman—Bagot rhymes with faggot, you know—than a Snooks with the twenty thousand in hand.'

'Possibly,' replied Delves drily. 'But a Bagot with the coin would be still more welcome.'

'You cannot eat your cake and have it, young man,' I retorted. And we played a game of fifty up, and then went to dress for dinner.

I never felt any doubt myself of the success of Delves's suit. If I had, a glance at Bagot Court would have removed it. The

Court, quaint at all times, and beautiful in summer, formed three sides of a hollow square. A great stone tower, latticed, so to speak, by wide mullioned windows, formed the principal side; and this time and lichens had mellowed to a deep orange tint. The wings were of still older date. They ran back from the front at right angles—long, many-gabled buildings of brick and timber, masked by rough-cast and veiled by westerias. Like all houses built in this shape, the Court was a rambling pile. It was a day's journey from the one end to the other. On the ground-floor a single long passage, following the exterior lines of the building, simplified matters for the stranger, but above he had no such assistance. There were at least six staircases. The rooms were on as many levels, and often the only way to reach a next-door neighbour was to go downstairs and ascend another corkscrew flight, past a fresh series of Bagots, who seemed, by the faint gleam of the candle, to be smirking in their frames.

Delves and I were more lucky. We occupied rooms adjoining one another in the west wing, with a tiny dark staircase, most suggestive of midnight murder, all to ourselves. Above us slept some of the servants. Underneath was the billiard-room, one of the handsomest rooms in the house, lined with bookshelves, and well warmed on winter nights by a great open fireplace, flanked by oak settles.

As I lay in bed that night I heard something: a crisp, sharp sound as easily recognised by an educated ear as any. It was the click of one billiard ball striking another. I fancy I must have lain some time listening to it, apprehending what it was, but not the time and place, until at last I grew less drowsy, and began to put one and one together. Then I started up in bed, remembering that it must be two o'clock at least; that all the men had come to bed at the same time with myself; and that therefore this sound needed explanation.

Could it be merely the echo in my ears of the day's play? No. Click! click! it came, at regular intervals. There could be no doubt. Some one in this still house, wrapped in slumber, this house in which early hours were kept, was playing billiards at two in the morning. And I had put out the billiard-room lights with my own hand two hours before, at least; and seen every one start to bed.

'It is Bagot,' was my first thought. 'He cannot sleep, and has gone downstairs. But Walton will not like it.'

Getting out of bed, I put on a dressing-gown, and softly felt my way to Bagot's room. The door was unlocked. The room was in darkness, but I heard him breathing, made my way to him, and awoke him.

'Hallo!' he cried, grasping me, 'who is it?'

'I, Brett. Do not make a noise,' I whispered. 'There is something wrong downstairs—something very queer, at any rate.' I made him listen. The sound of the balls was quite audible here.

'All right!' he said, briskly lighting his candle and getting up. 'It is Lingard, for a sovereign. We will go down and give him a fright.'

'He sleeps in the other wing,' I objected.

'Well, at any rate we will go and see who it is,' replied the young fellow, thoroughly wide awake now. And accordingly we silently opened the door, and with a guarded light apiece crept down the narrow staircase which had its foot within a few paces of the billiard-room door.

Pheugh! I nearly dropped the candle. Some one swiftly and silently scudded by me. A woman it seemed to be, coming from the billiard-room door; a woman startled by our approach. 'Who was it, Bagot?' I whispered; for all I had seen was a tall form in a blue robe. 'Who was it, old man?'

Delves did not answer. He was standing gazing down the now empty passage which led through the main building to the far wing, as if he thought by long looking he could conjure back the apparition or whatever it was. When I repeated my question he looked blankly at me, then dropped his eyes. 'I do not know who it was,' he muttered, speaking in a way unusual with him. 'Let us see who is here.'

For, listening, we could still hear the click of the billiard balls.

'What the dickens is up?' I said nervously, as he grasped the handle of the door. 'Who is it, do you think?'

The start which the woman had given me had shaken my nerves, and as for Bagot, his manner had changed strangely. He no longer seemed to look on the affair as a lark and our share in it as a joke. He spoke with savage emphasis as he answered, 'Who? The devil knows! But we will soon see!' and he flung the door wide open. I went in behind him.

Well, I had not looked for this. Leaning over the table in the full glare of the lights was Sefton's man. His face, scared out of all handsomeness, peered at us over his shoulder. One

hand—it shook—rested on the extended cue; a ball, even while we stood at gaze, slid with a soft thud—audible in the silence—the dead silence of the place—into a pocket. The man's jaw fell.

My first impulse was to laugh, but I checked it. In the bright quiet room I felt a sudden presence as of thunder in the air. Perhaps the man's terror struck me as strange; perhaps Bagot's dumbness. He, usually so frank and ready of speech, a first favourite with the servants and never without a merry word for them, stood tongue-tied now, devouring the interloper with his eyes. It was I who spoke first, who moved first. 'Fred!' I said, putting on all the sternness I could, 'what is the meaning of this? Will you explain, if you please.'

Pah! The fellow *was* frightened. He stuttered an inarticulate something; then recovered his voice and fell to abject entreaties. He had come down to use the table. He was fond of the game. He could not play in the day. He would not do it again, if we would overlook it, and not report him to Mr. Walton.

It struck me that his fear exceeded the occasion. But when I turned and saw Bagot's freezing face, I wondered no longer.

'Why, Bagot!' I said, thinking he was ill, for he was the last person to take an escapade of this kind seriously, 'what is the——'

He did not let me finish. He shocked and astonished me by his violence. He put me aside and faced the servant. 'You lie!' he exclaimed, addressing him in a voice trembling with passion, while he stretched out one hand as if he would grasp and shake him. 'You lie, man! You have not come down to use the table! You have not come down to play! You have come down to—to——' He broke off choked by his anger. For a moment he glared round wildly. Then exclaiming, I cannot say it! I cannot say it! You villain!' he turned and absolutely ran from the room.

For me, I was dazed. I was still looking from him to the servant in inexpressible wonder, when I found him gone. A moment's hesitation, and I hurried after him, in alarm, and some anger and more confusion, and heard him stumble up the narrow stairs like one blind. But when I reached the landing at the top he had locked his door behind him.

To go down to the billiard-room—and find it dark and the man vanished—this was my first impulse. Then I went to my own room and sat on the bed and pinched my arm. What had

passed must be a dream. The short interview, Delves's passion, the valet's fear, had left the imperfect impressions of a dream. But no, the pinch bit home, and I sat erect, listening until I was sure that all was quiet next door. This I did more than once, and so hung between troubled sleep and waking until morning. When I finally opened my eyes Bagot was at my bedside.

'Brett,' he began abruptly, as though he were afraid to let the resolution he had taken stand the test of an instant's delay, 'I have made up my mind to tell you. I must tell some one, or I shall go mad.'

'If I can do anything to help you,' I said, much concerned for him, 'go on, my dear boy.'

'You cannot. No one can,' he replied, in a cold impassive manner very unlike his usual way. 'Lingard, curse him! was right.'

'How do you mean? In what, Bagot?'

He had gone to the window, and spoke with his back to me. 'He said that man had come after one of—of the women. He told me which. He was about right. Clever fellow, Lingard,' with a bitter laugh.

I am pretty sharp at taking hints. I saw already at what he was driving. 'Do you mean,' I said, shocked that Bagot of all people should entertain such a thought—'that he is here on account of Miss Walton—of Bessie?'

'Aye, I do,' he answered drearily. 'Strange, is it not? But women are strange, Brett.'

'For shame!' I cried.

'Aye, shame indeed!' he said in the same tone.

I was befogged. I did not know how to take him, what to say to him. An idea so preposterous, and when entertained by him so abhorrent, shook my everyday reason. 'But, Bagot,' I asked feebly, 'you do not insinuate that she—Bessie—encourages him?'

'Look here,' he said, 'I must tell you all or nothing. That is just what I do mean. You know Lingard noticed her walking with him yesterday?'

'Why, you jealous fool!' I cried, springing out of bed, 'there was no harm in that. She had been picking fruit, and he carried the basket for her as any servant might.'

'Wait!' he answered, quite unmoved by my indignation. 'Did you notice that man's hand last night? You did not. I

did, Brett. He was wearing on his little finger Miss Walton's pearl ring—the one her father gave her last Christmas. I should know it among a hundred.'

'But she may have lost it. He may have found it,' I said, somewhat staggered by this.

'It was on her finger when I said good-night to her,' Bagot answered gloomily. 'Of that I am certain. It changed hands after midnight. And that is not all. You did not see who it was whom we all but caught coming out of the billiard-room this morning—at two o'clock this morning, Brett? I did. It was Miss Walton.'

'Impossible!' I cried, aghast, remembering that she slept in the other wing.

'It was. You shake your head. I tell you,' he repeated bitterly, 'it was. Do you think I should not know her anywhere—everywhere, man! And for that fellow's tale, do you believe it yourself? Who ever heard of a servant going down alone to use the billiard-table in the middle of the night?'

I found a difficulty there myself. I did not believe Delves's suspicions had any basis. I repudiated them stoutly in my own mind. But it was so difficult to explain Fred's conduct otherwise. His own story was improbable, and the more improbable the more closely I scanned it. On the other hand, if Delves were right, Fred's strange return and his vigil in the billiard-room became intelligible. So did his peculiar fear at sight of Bagot, whom all the household knew to be courting Miss Bessie.

I remembered, too, with a sinking of the heart a word which the butler had said to me before dinner the previous evening. He was an old servant, in Mrs. Walton's confidence, and meeting him on the stairs I had not scrupled to ask him if he could account for the reappearance of Mr. Sefton's servant. He could not; and on my asking him between jest and earnest if Fred was courting one of the maids, he had answered, 'No, sir. He keeps himself very stiff. I think he considers himself a cut above them.'

A cut above them! Umph! Could it be that Lingard was right?

'I shall leave to-day,' said Delves, preparing to go.

'No, you must do nothing of the kind,' I answered firmly. 'You must stay twenty-four hours at least.' And I made him promise this. Now that he had told his story, I could see how

white and heart-broken he looked. Yet while I pitied him I was angry with him. It was hard to remember that a lover is the most volatile creature in the world; and that for him from implicit confidence to degrading suspicion is but a step—a step taken in a moment.

Rather it seemed natural to think he should have been the last to harbour the thought. The thought! Oh, the pity of it, if he were right. I had heard of things like this before. I knew they happened—sometimes in places the least likely. But hitherto they had befallen my friends' friends, and I could shrug my shoulders.

A few days before we had taken tea on a small island in the river. And one of the boys had made a song of fair women—wretched doggerel it was—about the ladies, giving each a verse. I remembered Bessie's:

My next is tall and plump and free
As Elizabeth's self at Tilbury,
And cream and roses
And milk and posies
Are all in her face, that is fair to see.

She had been vexed in a good-humoured way by the word 'free,' and the minstrel had suffered no little. Could it be, I wondered now, that he had seen aright—that his more delicate insight, cynical young dog that he was! had read in that unaffected frankness which I found so charming a fatal lack of reserve—an odious facility?

No! a hundred times no! I would believe in Bessie, though all these gay young fellows should desert her. I sat next her at breakfast in the seat usually occupied by Bagot. He had quietly taken one by her father at the other corner. As he did so a shade crossed her pleasant grey eyes. I saw it though she dropped them quickly. She was visibly hurt and surprised. But she made no remark, and I strove by chatting volubly to cover his silence and draw off the Lingards' attention from his pallor. If there was one thing which could add to the wretched imbroglio impending, it was that that dreadful woman opposite should get an inkling of it.

No! a hundred times no! And yet something which happened presently sent a cold shiver down my back. Wilkins, the butler, while handing the toast to my neighbour, whispered, 'Your ring, miss.'

Perforce, as he was between us, I heard as well as she did. But the words were nothing. It was the vivid blush which instantly crimsoned her cheeks, the frightened glance she cast in Bagot's direction, that chilled me. 'Thank you,' she answered nervously; and her fingers hurriedly closed on the trinket and conveyed it beneath the table.

'Mr. Sefton's man gave it me, miss,' added the butler. But, though he moved away slowly, as if looking to be questioned, she asked him nothing. She did not inquire how Sefton's man came to have it or to send it to her, nor say a word about it to the butler or to me. Strange! Very strange!

I could not talk after that, and had scarce courage to answer Mrs. Lingard when she said with a thinly-veiled sneer, 'Well, Mr. Brett, have you got to the bottom of Master Fred's mystery yet?'

Confound her! 'Possibly, Mrs. Lingard, and possibly not,' I said, as coolly as I could.

'Why do you not take counsel with Miss Walton?' she continued in the same mocking tone. 'She was not with us when we discussed it yesterday. Perhaps she can solve the riddle for you. But you have other fish to fry,' she went on, turning to Bessie, 'have you not, my dear? I dare say you hardly know that such a person as Mr. Sefton's Fred exists.'

I dashed in with something. I could not bear to see the woman's cold eyes enjoying the girl's confusion. For, confused, red, and perhaps angry, Bessie was—whether at the mention of Sefton's servant or at the other insinuation, the covert reference to her tolerably public love affair with Delves—I could not determine. Only after this I hated Mrs. Lingard more than ever.

As a party we were more at odds than ever that day. We loitered about the house and grounds, alone or in pairs, killing time as we best might. Delves did not speak to Bessie save in the most formal manner—did not invite her to go in the boat or take a lesson at billiards, as had been his custom after breakfast. But the two went, so far as I could make out, and severally moped through the morning like broken-winged chickens. Every one saw that something was wrong; but as Fred had not 'spoken to papa' the affair had scarcely reached the stage at which one might interfere. I was in two minds whether I should not tell Mr. Walton of Fred's escapade in the billiard-room and

make the servant explain it. But Bagot had shown so strong a desire—foolish, but natural perhaps—not to meddle, that I determined to keep silence for a few hours at least.

Father Glyn came in to lunch, and caused a diversion very welcome to one of us. In old Mr. Bagot's time he had been an inmate of the house. Now, the Waltons being Protestants, he occupied a tiny parsonage in the garden. In person he was a short, white-bearded, slightly infirm man; most simple, courteous, kindly, liking the Waltons, who were good to him, but loving the old family, and Delves in particular, with a passionate love, surpassing, I really believe, that of a father.

He sat by Mrs. Lingard, by ill luck, for her bump of veneration was wanting, and the only views she held that savoured of the immaterial were connected with magic and palmistry. Her first instinct was to make fun of the old man. 'You should be good at explaining mysteries, Father Glyn,' she said; 'that is a main part of your business, is it not?'

I shuddered. But a round of quiet duties, perhaps age itself, had rendered his mind slow to work. 'I do not think I quite understand,' he said meekly. Her flippant manner was something new and formidable to him, but he did not dream that she could be deriding his office; and his very innocence baffled her.

'You must know a great many secrets, father, I mean,' she repeated, inviting us by a look to join in the sport—the precious sport!

'There are secrets in all lives, lady,' he said gravely.

'I think you had better take care, Mrs. Lingard,' I suggested softly, but so that all might hear.

'I wish you would mind your own business, Mr. Brett,' she cried rudely, losing her temper; there was her weak spot. 'I can take care of myself without your help. And for Father Glyn's secrets, I should think there are not many in this little village that are worth much. Mr. Brett is for making mysteries where there are none, father.'

'Strange things happen everywhere,' he answered quite eagerly. 'An old place has always its mysteries, its old stories and riddles, lady. There are some, for instance, who say that Mr. Courtenay Bagot—Delves has no doubt told you his story'—he ran on garrulously, 'never was robbed or murdered, but got safe to Derby, and died abroad in the Pretender's service, and that the tale was set about to save the estates. You know that, Delves?'

'To save the estates? From what?' Madame asked obtusely.

'From confiscation,' Delves answered, speaking for the old gentleman. 'But you do not believe the story, father?'

He shook his head, smiling at the lad. It was pleasant to see how proud he was of the tradition, and how he looked at Delves while he dwelt upon it. Bagot had often told me that the old gentleman would talk to him by the hour of this or that ancestor, pointing out their portraits, and detailing their virtues, and showing solicitude that he should know what marriages they had made and how they fared.

'Well,' said Mrs. Lingard weightily—she had about as much romance in her composition as may be extracted from a flat-iron—'I do not think much of your story or riddle, or whatever you call it, especially as wherever the old gentleman went there seems to be no doubt he took the money with him. It is not half so interesting—to Mr. Brett, at any rate—as the mystery of Fred.'

'Fred?' murmured the priest, puzzled and uncertain, the light gone from his face. 'I do not think I know him.'

'Well, there he is! Look!' cried the lady, touching the old gentleman's sleeve not too ceremoniously. Fred, as it chanced, had come within the room to take a dish from a servant, and, being inside, stood waiting a moment. Father Glyn had a good view of him. 'You do not see much mystery about him, I dare say,' continued Mrs. Lingard, casting a spiteful glance in my direction. 'Commonplace enough, is he not?'

The priest passed his hand across his forehead. 'I think I know his face,' he murmured thoughtfully, looking from one to another of us all with a puzzled expression. Fred had gone out again. 'Yes, I have seen his face before. But not lately. No, not for a long time. It was when your father was here, dear lad.'

Mrs. Lingard laughed. 'Nonsense!' she cried. 'Fred is but a boy of twenty now—or little more!'

And even Bagot said gently, 'I think you must be mistaken, father.'

But the priest did not give way. 'No,' he replied, in some excitement, 'I am right—and yet wrong. I remember now. His face put me in mind of a servant of your father's, a butler who died here suddenly many years ago. His name was Aston. I knew him well—very well indeed.'

In the pause which followed, Wilkins, who was standing

behind Mr. Walton's chair, stooped to his ear. 'Fred's name is Aston, sir,' he said in a low tone, but one which we all heard.

'What?' cried our host, turning sharply. 'Are you sure of that, Wilkins?'

'Quite sure, sir,' was the answer; 'Frederick Aston, sir.' And Wilkins fixed his eyes on the priest's face, much impressed, it was clear, by his sagacity.

'But does the man come from this part?' asked the Squire. And it may be imagined how heedfully we were listening. 'I thought he was a stranger—that he was not a Worcestershire man at all.'

'He gave himself out for a stranger, sir,' answered the butler cautiously. The other servants had left the room.

'Humph! It is rather odd!' commented the Squire, turning again to the table and looking round upon us, his glass between his fingers.

'It is, James,' Mrs. Walton agreed. 'Very odd! However, he goes to-morrow. And, Wilkins, you will not mention this downstairs, please. I always thought that there was something in the man's return that would not quite bear looking into.'

Bagot sat silent, his eyes cast down. Bessie's thoughts seemed to be elsewhere. For the rest of us, we started various theories, with this new light upon the subject, to account for Fred's presence. But as there were at least as many theories as persons at table, no one could make even a single convert; and we soon broke up in disorder. Mr. Walton disappeared in the direction of the stables. Bagot and I went off together to the keeper's. And the last I saw of Mrs. Lingard, she was working desperately to get up a flirtation with—*faute de mieux*—the old priest.

The sight of those two remained with me all day; more, I dreamed of them that night. I fancied I saw her amid shrieks of laughter dragging the old priest towards the altar, while Sefton's servant—casting a sinister backward glance at them and me—lit one by one the score of candles below the altar-piece—a faded San Sebastian. The bright light presently dazzled me. My eyes smarted and grew dim. I awoke, the smart in them still.

What was this? A red glow flickered on the walls of my room, and now rose, now sank irregularly. A puff of white smoke—and yet another—darted snake-like through the open window. I watched them lazily, lying with my face that way. But a third followed.

Ha! I sprang out of bed wide awake, at the same moment that a voice outside screamed shrilly, 'Fire!' Huddling on a few clothes, and snatching up my watch—a keepsake—I ran to Bagot's door. 'Delves!' I cried, bursting it in, for it was bolted, 'get up! The Court is on fire!'

II.

ONCE assured that Bagot had taken the alarm, I made all haste to the Courtyard. The fire was in the opposite wing, and had as yet made little way. Though flames were bursting through two of the lower windows, and beginning to lick the woodwork of the upper ones, the rest even of that wing was untouched. But the scene as I took it in at a glance was exciting enough. In the middle of the Courtyard a score of men and women, some of them only half-dressed, were huddled together, a mass of silhouettes, of high lights and deep shadows. One was sunk in stupor, another was in frantic action. Above and around, the glow fell ruddily on the tall face of the tower and the sharp peaks of gables, and picked out as with gold the thousand diamond panes of the windows.

'Let all the women go into the west wing!' I heard Walton say in a cool collected way, his sharp voice rising crisply above the hubbub. 'They will be safe there, and they are doing no good here! Brett, take Bessie in, please.'

I obeyed. When I returned I found things looking better. A number of servants, with Bagot in command, were already in line passing buckets. Others were throwing water on the nearer parts of the building, for much of the danger to the rest of the house lay in the falling sparks; but apart from this there was every chance that we should save the old place, despite its age. The fire was mainly in the great kitchen, one of the oldest parts of the Court, built of stone and paved with the same; so that, after licking up some surface material, the flames found little to feed upon, and were slow in spreading.

'Look!' said Walton to me—I had taken my turn, but was soon tired, and we were standing somewhat in the rear, directing operations—'how that fellow works! Bagot has done his best to save his own place, but that man beats him hollow!'

He pointed to the man who had taken Bagot's place at the head of the line, and who now, stripped to his jersey and trousers, was standing with one foot on a reversed tub, the other on the sill of the window, discharging the buckets into the room as fast as they could be handed to him. To see him take them full and toss them back empty, like so many toys, was a sight for sore eyes. Sometimes the smoke and steam which eddied about him hid him from view; but when the wind dispersed the cloud he was always there. More than once a cheer from the gathering crowd of villagers rewarded him. His face was black with smuts, his hair was singed, his port was that of a hero. No wonder that I did not recognise him, that I took him for one of the stablemen or gardeners, and answered, 'Yes, he is working like a giant! Who is he?'

'Don't you know?' exclaimed the Squire. 'It is Sefton's man. He shall have a five-pound note to-morrow! Aye, and stay here as long as he likes. Jane will have nothing to say against him after this, I will lay a penny!'

Bagot had joined us, and, hearing the last words, stood frowning by my side. No doubt it was unpleasant to stand by and see a rival—and such a rival—distinguish himself. But he said nothing. And I said nothing; for what was there to be said?

Yet I was greatly astonished. The finicking, supercilious young fellow whom we had known as Fred was the last person I should have expected to be of use in such an emergency. Handling buckets at a fire and fighting the flames—these were not things I had pictured him doing. Yet here he was doing them, manfully and well. Either we had been much mistaken in him, or he had some very strong inducement to act in this way. Was it the knowledge that Bessie was at one of the windows, watching the scene? or merely a desire to put her father under an obligation? or both combined?

Anyway, his exertions proved successful. The fire was as good as out; and many of the helpers falling back and standing round us, the talk naturally reverted to its origin. 'There is not very much damage done, sir, I think,' said Wilkins.

'No,' replied the Squire genially—his relief was great. 'For a wonder there is not. But if the fire had broken out anywhere else, the house must have gone. Why, half the walls are of timber, and as dry as touchwood.'

'How did it come to break out at all?' asked Bagot querulously.

lously. 'And in the kitchen! The fires in this hot weather would be out hours ago, would they not?'

'Ten to one the cook was making jam, or something of that kind,' said the Squire confidently.

But the cook repudiated the jam-making, asserting roundly that she had let the fires go out after dishing up the dinner. The servants had taken a cold supper. The butler, too, had been through the kitchen at half-past ten and locked the doors. The fires were out then. He had carried a guarded lamp, as usual, and was certain that he had dropped no sparks.

'Well,' said the Squire on this, 'we will go into it to-morrow.' And he led the way to the billiard-room, where the ladies were sitting. For a few moments after our entrance, what with the hubbub of congratulations, inquiries, and offers of refreshment, and some badinage on our dirty faces, it was hard to see who was in the room and who was not. Mr. Walton was the first to note that one was missing. 'Where is Bessie?' he cried loudly. 'Where is the girl gone?'

She came in at the moment, and answered for herself. 'Here I am, father,' she said quietly.

'Where have you been, child?' asked Mrs. Walton, making room for her on the settle. 'What have you been doing?'

'Doing? Thanking Fred for his gallantry,' she answered, her colour rising, her tone animated. 'And I think there are some others who should have done it too, instead of leaving him without a word! He has behaved nobly, I think!'

'Bravo! He shall have a five-pound note to-morrow!' answered the Squire.

But she was not looking at her father. Her eyes were turned full on Bagot, with a meaning in them I could not fathom. It might be appeal, or sympathy, or defiance—either. But whatever it was, his eyes returned no answer, and hers quickly dropped. Some one remarked that he looked haggard and tired; and leaving Mrs. Lingard in the middle of her tenth recital of the manner in which she had been aroused, and of all that she had said, and all that Lingard had said, I took him away with me.

'This is likely to put our old puzzle into the background,' I said, eying him stealthily as we plodded upstairs together.

'What? The fire?'

'To be sure. What else?'

'It is all one,' was his curious answer.

'You do not mean,' I said, 'that you think——'

'Sefton's servant was at the bottom of it? Yes, I do,' he rejoined.

'But come, come!' I urged, turning into his room. 'This is a nasty thing to lay at any man's door, Bagot. You know nothing.'

'Nothing at all,' he answered coldly, 'except that he did it—intentionally or by accident. I know nothing. Or—see here, Brett. The fire broke out about half-past one—from that to two. Who was so likely to be about then as the man who lit up the billiard-room at two o'clock the morning before? What would Walton say to this if he knew of that? Oh, no doubt,' he added, with a bitter, jeering laugh, cut short in the middle by a sort of shudder, 'he is a regular Don Juan! In the drawing-room one evening, and the kitchen the next!'

'Bagot,' I said deliberately, the sneer was so vile, 'you are either out of your mind or a brute!' And I left him without another word, thinking how strange a lover's eyes are. They know no colours. His mistress is always purest white or foulest black. There is no betwixt and between. If he one day invests his Dulcinea with qualities rather angelic than of the earth, he is as prone the next, on the slightest provocation, to say, 'Vice, thy name is woman!' and tilt at a windmill. It is so, and it is strange.

At the late breakfast which followed our troubled night Bagot talked loudly and at random with the Lingards, seeming to avoid me, and I saw nothing of him until about noon. Then, turning the corner of a walk in the shrubbery, I came upon him—and Fred with him. They were having an altercation—I might have expected it. As I came up I heard Bagot exclaim, 'No! I want to hear nothing, my man! Nothing! Will you be good enough to go your way, and let me go mine.'

'It is for your own sake, sir,' urged the servant respectfully enough.

'Hallo!' thought I, 'this is a new development.' And I noted the contrast the two men presented as they stood together: Bagot, with his tall, heavy form and cropped black hair, his lips curling with scorn, his head in the air; the other, tall also, but slim and fair, with a small pale moustache—more handsome, even in the larger lines of more aristocratic type, but stamped by custom and education with the bearing of an inferior. 'What is it, Bagot?' I interposed.

He did not answer, and Fred appealed to me volubly. 'Mr. Bagot will not listen to me. He does not give me a hearing, sir,' he cried. 'You are his friend. Might I beg a hearing from you, sir?'

'What is it you want with him?' I asked civilly.

'Something that is for his advantage. In the main, I mean, sir. And a bit for mine too.'

'Oh, rubbish!' Bagot exclaimed savagely. 'Come along, Brett.' But I did not move, and the man after a slight pause continued, 'It is about Miss Walton, sir—in a way.'

I took tight hold of Bagot's arm, and kept him there almost by main force. I felt queer myself, hearing those words; but I had such confidence in Bessie that I was determined he should hear the fellow out now. 'About Miss Walton?' I repeated as carelessly as I could. 'About her ring, is it?'

'The ring I found? Oh, no, sir,' readily enough.

'Then what is it?' I asked. He had paused again, and was shifting his feet and looking about him uneasily, while I was burning with impatience.

'It is about Mr. Bagot and her, sir,' he blurted out. 'It is common talk in the servants' hall that Mr. Bagot—speaking without offence, sir—is sweethearting the young lady. And I think—well, I can give him a leg up, sir. That is the point—give him a leg up, sir, for a consideration.'

Bagot, I regret to say, swore violently. But I had his arm as in a vice. 'Indeed?' I replied smoothly. 'And how?'

'Well, I know something—he would like to know, sir.'

'Ah! About Miss Walton?'

'It has to do with her in the way I have said,' he answered doggedly; afraid of letting out his secret—for some secret I now gathered he had to dispose of—and yet finding it difficult without doing so to indicate its value. 'I mean he could marry her more pleasant-like, if he knew it, sir. I overheard a word or two he said to you about his means in the billiard-room—it is two days ago now—and can benefit the young gentleman if he will let me. I know something that is worth money to him, which I am ready to tell him for a consideration.'

'You may go to the deuce for me!' cried Bagot hotly.

'Steady a minute!' I said smiling—and my heart laughed if my lips did but smile. He had suspected Bessie, had he?—the dolt! the idiot! 'I think I understand, though you are not very

plain with us, my friend. Perhaps your price may be more definite. What do you want for your secret ?

'A thousand pounds,' he answered, blinking with his eyes.

Bagot had been whistling contemptuously. He stopped in astonishment.

I laughed aloud. 'Do you think any sane man would give a thousand pounds for a pig in a poke?' I said.

He reddened with anger, and broke out violently with, 'If it is not worth a thousand pounds—ten times a thousand pounds to him, may I——' and he added the usual formula.

'Stop!' said I. 'If it be not worth ten times a thousand pounds to Mr. Bagot, will you let him off his bargain?'

'I will,' he replied.

'Now,' and I turned to Bagot, 'what do you say to that?'

'Say?' he cried. 'That I will have nothing whatever to do with him or his infernal nonsense! Let him go to the deuce with his secret. I will have none of it!'

'I speak in your own interest,' said Fred sullenly. 'A thousand to me if my information be worth ten thousand to you. If less to you, nothing to me. Hang me! that is straight enough.'

'Straight or not, I will have no dealings with you!' replied Bagot haughtily.

'Go down the walk a few yards, Fred,' I interposed, 'and I will speak to Mr. Bagot.'

When he had obeyed me—he did not go far, but moved round to the lawn on the other side of the hedge, and kept his eye upon us suspiciously—I took Delves by the button. 'Look here,' I said. 'There is hanky-panky of some kind going on, no doubt. But you ought to be thankful it is not of the kind you thought. Yes, you ought!' I resumed angrily, for he shook his head as if not assured upon that point yet. 'You have been a dolt and a fool, my lad, and deserve to suffer for it. Act sensibly now if you can.' And I did my best to persuade him to accept Fred's conditions. 'A hundred chances to one,' I argued, 'it is all rubbish. Very well, you are no worse. If, on the other hand, the information he gives be worth the ten thousand, ten per cent. is not too high a price to pay for it.'

But he was not listening to me. And, seeing this, I was going to speak unpleasantly to him, when, following his eyes, I saw that some one passing down the lawn had stopped, and was speaking to Fred. Some one—a girl—Bessie. We could hear what she

said, and we listened shamelessly. Why not? I, for one, knew that she could have nothing to say to Sefton's servant which we might not hear.

'You are leaving to-day, are you not?' Her clear silvery tone came crisply through the air; his answer we could not hear. 'Indeed?' it came again. How could any one have suspected a woman with such a voice? 'I am much indebted to you for taking the trouble to return my ring to me yesterday. I left it on the cushion of the billiard-table. I do not mind telling you,' she went on pleasantly, 'that my father was very angry with me for mislaying it a few weeks ago, and I was anxious not to be scolded this time. I went down to the room myself, but I found the gentlemen were still up.'

A few more words passed about her father wishing to see him, and some money clinked. Then she flitted on, little recking what she had effected.

But we stood there—stood still looking different ways. Bagot did not dare to raise his eyes or meet mine. I in sheer mercy and pity did not look at him. What had he done? Or rather, what had he not done? Vulcan had called Venus smirched! Bottom had dubbed Titania ass! An English gentleman had slandered his own sweetheart! All this Master Delves had done. But if Bessie was not avenged in that moment—if her pride—could she have known of the offence, as Heaven forbid she should—had not found solace enough in his humiliation then—she was not the girl I took her for, but a very merciless vixen indeed.

I could not say anything to him about that. I dared not. I merely proposed to him with affected carelessness—as assuming his consent—that we should accept Fred's terms.

But he said 'No!' still. 'I will have nothing to do with his secrets! You are all too clever for me. Arrange what you like, but I will have no act or part in it, nor pay him anything.' All this with a dull red flush on his face and averted eyes.

His prejudice against the man was invincible, and, seeing I could not prevail, I let him go back to the house, and returned alone to Fred.

'It is of no use,' I said brusquely—between them they were enough to spoil any man's temper. 'Mr. Bagot will have nothing to say to your offer. If you take my advice you will make a clean breast of it, and trust to his generosity. It is not likely you can sell your knowledge elsewhere—honestly.'

'That is part of my secret, sir,' he said coolly.

'Oh, very well. Only be careful what you are doing,' I replied, somewhat nettled. 'Mr. Bagot and I shall of course put our heads together. We know one or two queer things of you already. Why are you here, Fred? What were you doing in the billiard-room the night before last? What were you doing in the east wing last night when you set the house on fire?'

His jaw fell. I saw the perspiration start out and stand gleaming on his forehead; and I knew, notwithstanding his hasty denials, that my chance shot had told. But I appeared to accept his statements, and said, 'Very well, you say you did not set the house on fire. But why have you made a secret of the fact that your father was butler here in old Mr. Bagot's time?'

My turn again. He stood silent, disconcerted, doubtful how much I knew, how much it would be safe for him to deny. 'Do you not think you had better be candid, my man, and tell me your secret?' I said.

He recovered himself. 'No, sir, I think not,' he replied grimly.

Going back to the house after this, I came, as I crossed the courtyard, upon Bagot and Father Glyn. They were standing outside the shattered empty casements of the kitchen, looking in at the mischief done by the fire; and I joined them. The bare smoke-stained walls seemed dreary enough after the sunshine and trees, but the stone floor of the room—tradition said it had once been the banqueting hall—was chaos itself, littered a foot deep with plaster and rubbish, fragments of half-burned furniture, and charred beams which had fallen from the chimneypiece. Pots and pans lay about, and pools of water stood among the débris.

'Dear, dear!' cried the priest, 'what a sad sight!'

'Particularly in a kitchen,' I suggested cheerfully. Bagot stood between us, leaning his elbows on the sill and looking in.

'Very true. Yet I have seen as sad a sight in this room before,' rejoined the father, 'a very sad sight. It was in your father's lifetime, Delves. His butler died suddenly. I suppose it is the sight of this room brings it so freshly to my mind to-day, for he was found dead here, in that corner, when the servants came down one morning.'

He spoke slowly and thoughtfully, searching his memory as old men will; and he had clean forgotten his recognition of Aston the day before, as old men will forget: it was curious. I turned slightly to see if Bagot noticed the lapse; and then I forgot it all.

Beyond him, at the next casement, stood Fred, apparently looking in idly as people had been doing all day, and as we were doing now, but really, or so I suspected, listening to us. 'You were living here then, Father Glyn,' I said, suddenly minded to pursue the subject. Neither of my companions had seen our new neighbour.

'Yes. They brought me to him at once to see if there was any life in him. Ah, me! In the midst of life—— You know the rest, my children.' And the old gentleman crossed himself and muttered piously, 'It was a sad thing, and strange too.'

If my own curiosity had not led me to question him further, Fred's face, upon which I was able to keep watch without attracting his notice, would have induced me to do so. It was strangely pale, I thought, and his lips were pressed together. He was gazing into the empty room, and seemed unconscious of our presence; but I knew by some instinct that his every sense was on the alert, that he was not losing a word. 'What was the cause of death, Father Glyn?' I said carelessly. 'You were saying that there was something strange about it.'

'He died of heart-complaint. There was nothing strange in that,' the priest explained. 'It was what he had been doing was strange.'

'And what was that?'

'Well,' replied the priest in his slow, meditative way, 'there were people who said he had been digging his own grave.'

'Good gracious! In that corner?' I cried, startled.

'Yes. Some said it was a penance, and some that he had had a warning. He had certainly lifted up one of the square stones, and scraped out a little earth, just as it might be that rubbish there now. He was lying dead and cold by the side of it, with the tool in his hand. Doubtless he was out of his mind.'

I stole a look at Fred. His eyes met mine. His face was livid. I stood silent a moment, during which my mind was working as fast as at any time in my life. Then I called to Fred. 'Fred!'
I said, 'would you fetch the key of the kitchen for me? Wilkins has it.'

He seemed to hesitate. Perhaps he had not heard clearly. But in the end he said, 'Yes, sir,' and walked away.

Bagot became aware of the servant for the first time. 'What on earth do you want to go inside for?' he asked discontentedly. 'Cannot you see all you want to see from here?'

'A whim, a mere whim, my dear fellow,' I answered. And I

waited with patience until Fred, after a rather long interval, returned.

'Wilkins says he cannot find the key, sir,' he reported. 'He thinks Mr. Walton, who has gone to the magistrates' meeting, has taken it with him.'

'Ah! Then please to reach me that chair,' I said. There were two or three chairs standing, as usual, in the courtyard, not far from us. While he was bringing one I took off my coat.

'What are you going to do now?' Bagot asked.

'Get in through the window,' I answered, suiting the action to the word, and boldly stepping from the chair to the sill, where I stood clinging to the perpendicular bars. But there I came to a full-stop. Struggle as I would, I stuck fast between them, while the priest clutched one of my ankles, and affectionately begged me to be careful, and Delves prodded my calves with the point of his stick, and cried that Mrs. Lingard was coming.

Well, I am a trifle stout. I cannot say I like to be found by the enemy in a ridiculous position. I was on the point of stepping back, when turning to see if the alarm were well founded, I caught sight of Fred's face. It expressed no amusement, but a great deal of grim, silent interest. 'Don't, Delves!' I gasped, nerved by the sight to a last effort; which proved successful. I was down, and my coat on, when the Lingards reached the window. They chose to be funny, compared me to a bear in a pit, and Madame threw me a ball of paper by way of a bun; but I cared nothing for their ridicule now. I picked my way over the rubbish to the far corner of the kitchen. Here the fire had probably begun, for the walls and ceiling were completely ruined, and quite a pile of débris—the same to which Father Glyn had pointed—lay here: more of it, I had thought, looking from the window, than was natural. I was stooping over this, amid a volley of questions, when the voice of a new-comer caused me to look up.

'Got through the window, did he?' the Squire was saying. 'Why, Brett, what are you up to? Why did you not send for the key? Wilkins has it.'

'Not he,' I answered. 'He sent word that you had it.'

'I? Certainly not.' And thereupon Walton, anxious, I fancy, to show how light and slight and springy he still was, stepped on to the sill, and in five seconds stood beside me. Bagot, Father Glyn, and Mrs. Lingard remained at one of the low wide Elizabethan windows, Lingard and the servant at the other. Fred's

face glared in at me, pale, pinched, menacing—the index to the situation, or I was much mistaken.

I kicked aside two or three pieces of charred wood. 'Look here,' I said to Walton; 'how does this earth come here?'

'Earth? Why, so it is!' he exclaimed, stooping down. 'Perhaps some one tried to put out the fire with it before we came on the scene.'

'Not likely,' I said. I looked about for a tool with which to carry on my researches. I picked up a saucepan at last, and with it scraped away some of the rubbish. The Squire asked questions, but I paid no heed to them until I found what I wanted, and what I had looked to find. Then I stood up, and made a sign to Fred—a sign imperative. 'Fred,' I cried, 'come in here, please! And Bagot,' I continued, turning to Delves, 'you had better come too. Do not play the fool, but come!' I added sharply, seeing that he hesitated.

While they were obeying me, neither of them very willingly, I begged Lingard to call one of the gardeners, and bid him bring his spade. Then, directing Fred to stand aside a moment, I showed the Squire and Delves that one of the flat stones which formed the floor was not in its place. Apparently it had been raised, and hastily thrown back. Bagot, in a few seconds, had it up again. Its removal disclosed a shallow hole, perhaps a foot deep, from which, no doubt, the earth I had noticed had been taken.

'Who has done this?' cried the Squire, looking into it open-eyed and open-mouthed, while great beads of perspiration stood upon Master Fred's brow. 'And how did you discover it, Brett?'

'That remains to be seen,' I replied oracularly. I bade the gardener, who had just climbed into the room with a couple of spades on his shoulder, dig deeper. 'And, Fred,' I added with politeness, 'perhaps you will take a spade and lend a hand.'

Rage, fear, and perplexity struggled for the mastery in his face. I wondered that the others did not see that something was wrong. When he did not stir, but looked at me as though he could kill me, I made as if I did not notice it, and went on speaking to the Squire. 'Who did it? The man who set your house on fire last night, I expect,' I said.

'Ho! ho! Sits the wind in that quarter?' cried Walton. 'Then he had better let me catch him! I promise you, he will be in Worcester gaol in a very short time.'

'Come, Fred,' I said sweetly, 'take a spade.' And this time Fred took one, and began to dig feverishly, with his face hidden from me.

Bagot whistled, understanding at last something of what was afoot. The Squire asked me what I expected to find.

'That remains to be seen,' I said, repeating my old formula. 'Dig away, men!'

And for a few minutes they worked steadily. Then Fred threw down his shovel, and turned to Bagot. 'I have a word to say to you, sir,' he exclaimed.

'No,' replied Delves coldly. 'Not alone, at any rate. If you have anything to say to me, you can say it before these gentlemen.'

'Freddy would a wooing go, Whether his Bagot would let him or no,' hummed Mrs. Lingard at the window, while the old priest raised his hand to his ear. Every one could see the servant's agitation now. Every face was turned to him.

'You had better make a clean breast of it,' I said to him, not unkindly. 'We are on the track, Fred. Take my advice, and make a virtue of necessity.'

'No!' he replied, confronting us all with pallid defiance. Sefton would scarcely have known his dandified servant. 'He has treated me like a dog, and he may find it for himself!'

'Hear, hear!' cried Mrs. Lingard, clapping her gloved hands, as the man turned on his heel, strode to the window, and disappeared through it. My sympathies were with her for once. As for Bagot, he shrugged his shoulders and looked on with hard eyes.

'Heaven send me rest!' said the Squire in amazement, 'if I understand this at all.'

'Sefton's man could have explained it,' I replied ruefully. 'But Bagot's confounded pride has upset the cart. All I know for certain is that some one has been digging here; and, as people do not dig for pleasure merely, I presume there is something underneath worth the trouble.'

'That is it, is it?' he answered; and he promptly sent the gardener to fetch two of his fellows. The luncheon-bell rang; but we had breakfasted late, and the *auri sacra fames* overcame what appetite we had. Mrs. Walton and Bessie joined the party, having heard what was going on. Wilkins came too—to keep the other servants at a distance. Rapidly the men threw out the

earth ; the eyes of the lookers-on, bent greedily on the hole, or respectfully on me, grew larger and larger.

But presently an uncomfortable change fell upon us ; little by little, very gradually, a change becoming more apparent as the excavation gained depth. A titter here, a suppressed laugh there, a smile, it seemed to me, everywhere. When the men at last threw down their tools, having raised a heap of soil that almost crowded us out of the room, and not found so much as a penny piece, the laughter could no longer be repressed. No wonder I looked foolish ; I felt foolish. I had made all this to-do, and found nothing ! I, a middle-aged, unromantic man ! I believe I blushed.

'Come to lunch,' cried the Squire, good-naturedly drawing me away. 'Come to lunch, and say no more about it.'

But at lunch others were not so good-natured. 'What did you expect to find there, Mr. Brett ?' Madame asked.

'Ten thousand pounds,' I confessed, when she had pressed me a little.

'Gad !' cried the Squire, surprised out of his politeness. 'I did not think that you were such a fool, Brett !'

How they laughed ! Even Bessie, who was sitting by me, very quiet and still, laughed with the rest ; and Bagot, the ungrateful wretch, was as loud as any.

'How did you think it came there ?' Walton asked.

But I was too sore to offer any explanation. 'How it came there,' I said hotly, 'is of no consequence now.'

'How it did not come to be there is more to the point, is it not ?' said Mrs. Lingard quaintly. And everybody, even my old friend Mrs. Walton, laughed anew.

'Possibly,' I said, still more nettled, 'and possibly not. But come, I will do this. I will bet any gentleman here fifty guineas that I find not ten, but one thousand pounds, within twenty-four hours.'

'Treasure-trove ?' cried Lingard briskly.

'Yes, treasure-trove.'

'Then, done with you !' he answered. And he booked the bet. His wife asked if I would do it in gloves, and I did—to five dozen pairs ; while Mrs. Walton looked much annoyed, and the Squire muttered something about not making fools of ourselves. And then Bessie changing the subject, and lunch being nearly at an end, I escaped, and sought the butler.

The afternoon passed uneventfully. But at dinner a surprise awaited us. There appeared six chairs instead of seven. 'Who is away?' asked Walton, looking round as he sat down. 'Oh, it is Bessie.'

'Where is she?' Mrs. Lingard asked.

'I must apologise for her,' Mrs. Walton answered very graciously. 'Mary Young came over this afternoon and carried her off to The Chafers, to a little dance they are having this evening. She was going there on Saturday to stay a week—did she not mention it to you?—and as you were leaving us to-morrow, she thought she might run away to-day, under the circumstances.'

'Lucky girl, to be going to a dance!' said Madame, with feeling. 'Do you not wish you were going too, Mr. Bagot?'

Oh, the jade! And yet I could not pity him, not a whit, although I knew that Mrs. Walton's quiet announcement—not addressed to him, oh, dear no, it had nothing to do with him—had robbed his sky of the sun, and left him a prospect dull, cloudy, miserable. She was gone, and he had not made it up with her! He had felt secure in her presence. He had dreaded the moment when he must abase himself. And so he had put off the day, and now she was gone! 'Ha! ha! Master Delves,' thought I, as he stammered some answer to Mrs. Lingard's question, and went on eating dust and ashes from a plate which his hostess had heaped with Severn salmon. Ha! ha! my friend. This will do you good! This will teach you a lesson!' And I silently drank Bessie's health in a glass of chablis.

Presently the talk turned on Sefton's servant. 'You thought you had got to the bottom of that mystery, Mr. Brett,' Madame said, with a smirk. 'You had better have taken counsel with my husband. He is up to most of the moves on the board—especially the zig-zag ones.'

'You know, you are too romantic, Brett,' he chimed in, heavy, conceited beast! 'You let your fancy run away with you. And fancy carries you to the devil!'

'Underground, at any rate,' from his wife.

'There, there, do not be too hard upon him,' said the Squire.

'What is it, Wilkins?' For the butler had entered hastily.

But I did not wait for Wilkins to speak. His face was enough for me. I rose and threw down my napkin—the dessert was on—and lifted my glass with an irrepressible gesture of triumph. 'Bagot,' I said solemnly, 'I wish you joy!' And I drank his

health. He turned very red. He was thinking of something else.

'What do you mean?' he stammered.

'Come and see,' I replied. 'Come and see.' And that was all I would tell them. Wilkins went before, beaming with importance. I marshalled the party after him down the stairs and across the courtyard to the kitchen. The butler let us in with the key, which had been found—I could guess where. The room seen in the twilight was in a state of horrible disorder, piled almost to the ceiling with loose soil and stones. Three or four men leaning on their spades were standing near the fireplace. 'Why,' cried Mrs. Walton as I helped her over the rubbish, 'you have dug another hole, I see.'

'Yes,' I answered, 'we have, and with better success. We searched on the wrong side of the hearth before, that was all. Bagot, this is your business, if Walton will permit me to say so. Will you come forward and see what they have found.'

He did so. Under his eyes the men removed from the hole three small wooden cases bound with iron; old—very old—and very heavy. 'Gad!' cried the Squire, amid exclamations of astonishment from all, 'the Crown will have something to say to this.'

'I think not,' I replied, bearing my triumph as modestly as I could. 'The money can be identified. I believe there are five thousand guineas or sovereigns in each case. Old Squire Courtenay has made restitution at last.'

'How do you mean?' cried several.

'He never took away the money,' I answered.

Then tools and lights were brought, and the cases were burst open. I was right. They contained guineas, chiefly of the two earlier Georges, in rouleaux. We did not stay to count them, but had them carried at once to the strong room, and locked up for the night. Then we went back to the dinner table, and there before the old coat of arms which had seen one Bagot dine with the Gunpowder Plot in his mind, and a list of Catesbys, Winters, and Throckmortons in his pocket, and another sit brooding over the vileness of Hanover rats and the chances of the Pretender, we drank—not I alone, but all, this time—Delves Bagot's health.

'And now,' said the Squire, 'tell us all about it.'

'I bought the secret from Fred this afternoon,' I explained willingly, 'giving him fifty pounds down, which Lingard here

will have the pleasure of paying—and promising him another fifty in case of success. The last, I am sure, Bagot will not grudge.'

'If he does I will pay it myself!' cried Walton.

Then I told them Fred's story. His father, butler to old Mr. Bagot, had by some chance found a memorandum in a book in the library. He had read it, and learned a stupendous secret. Old Courtenay Bagot had, as tradition said, raised twenty thousand guineas for the Pretender's service, and, along with his servant, been waylaid and murdered on his night-ride to Derby. But the thieves had not got all the money, for with a last instinct of prudence the old Jacobite had left fifteen thousand guineas buried under the kitchen floor, not doubting but that a few days would see the rightful king's troops in the neighbourhood.

The butler was sure that the money still lay there, and, his cupidity aroused, he said nothing to his master, but, confiding only in his wife, tried to possess himself of the treasure. How the wretched man died with his hand upon it has been told by Father Glyn.

'And the wife?'

'Kept the secret, but shrank from using it. From her it passed to Fred. He was a stranger to the place, however, his mother having left the village, and he was more than half inclined to think the story a fiction. It was only when Sefton's chance visit brought him to the very house, that Fred's interest awoke; and then, owing to the presence of so many visitors and their servants, he could find no opportunity for search. He persuaded his master in some way to let him return; and it was while he was searching the books in the billiard-room to find the memorandum that Bagot and I surprised him; he had been imprudent enough, having found what he wanted, to take up a cue. That gave me a clue to the author of the fire last night.'

Mr. Walton whistled. 'He did not do it on purpose?'

'Oh, dear, no. While he was digging he upset his lamp over the wood laid ready to light the fires next morning. The oil flamed up, and he had just time to replace the stones at random and give the alarm. But this accident, happening to him at that moment, and coinciding so strangely with the facts of his father's death, frightened him; and he tried this morning to sell the secret to Bagot, through me.'

'Why did he not go to Bagot himself?' some one asked.

But I did not answer that—then or ever; and Delves had dis-

appeared. Madame, I think, nosed a rat, and promised herself to put the question to the young gentleman next day. But she was doomed to disappointment, for next day he did not appear at breakfast; and Mrs. Walton placidly explained that she had found it necessary to send a note to Bessie, and he had been good enough to breakfast early, and ride over to The Chafers with it.

The Lingards left after lunch, their curiosity on that point still unsatisfied, and an hour later Delves and Bessie were with us. At tea we were the merriest party in the world, though I felt a little old too. I wondered at times, then and afterwards, how Delves had satisfactorily explained his coolness to his sweetheart; and it was Bessie herself who enlightened me at last. 'Why, you dear old man,' she whispered, with a charming blush, 'do you not know that he was jealous of *you*?'

'Of me? Oh, the villain! the unmitigated rascal!'

